

2 news

Hairless good boyo creates dazzling effect

To begin at the beginning. It is afternoon in the great brown, gothic brown, MP bobbing, minister yelling House. And on a green bench in the front, William Hague – Secretary of State for Wales and very good boyo – is alternately answering questions and dreaming of leading his party.

Destined for greatness, Hague seems to radiate light from an opening in his head. This is because his pate, almost entirely devoid of follicular product, is for some reason the shiniest at Westminster. Other hairless heads are mat finished, but Hague's is done in skin-coloured deep-gloss, polished with an expensive chamois and an extremely competent and vigorous chamber-maid. To



DAVID AARONOVITCH

gether with his agreeable smile, the effect is – literally – dazzling.

A Yorkshireman himself, all around him he hears the lilt of the valleys, as Welshmen (no women), ask and reply to questions. Win Griffiths (Lab, Bridgend) speaks in Chapel language of youngsters being "imbued with moral purpose and direction". The hits are

and virile-looking junior minister, Gwilym Jones (who is as hairy as Hague is smooth) delivers himself of non sequiturs and absurdities, in a beautiful, almost musical voice. "Anyone in any doubt about Labour's lack of priority for the health service, should look at what they've done to education," he says at one point.

But it is Alan Williams (Lab, Carmarthen) who really gets things moving. Mr Williams suffers two disabilities: one – that he has a voice exactly like Gladys Pugh from *Hi-de-hi* – is involuntary. The other – a haircut borrowed from Ringo Starr in 1964, and never subsequently restyled – is of his own making. He raises the case of a Mrs Tattersall and her seven children,

who inhabit three rooms in Llandover. His colleague Alun Rogers (Lab, Rhondda) asks how many are on the housing waiting list in Wales. The minister is indignant – of course they don't have figures for the homeless, and no bistro-ponies will force them to produce any. But he can tell the House, apparently, how many new trees have been planted in the principality. Which leaves the strong impression that the Welsh Office is far more exercised by treelessness than homelessness. "What about tree-houses?" heckles one Labour member.

The shadow Welsh Secretary Ron Davies, with that handsome plausibility which characterises so many Welsh

politicians, is baiting the Tories over law and order, which can "only be restored by spanking schoolchildren and shooting burglars". This is a reference to Welsh Tory, Walter Sweeney (majority 19, Vale of Glamorgan), who is sitting opposite. Mr Sweeney, a large, half-varnished wooden man (who looks like something that I once made in woodwork class, but decided not to take home) apparently believes in instant and summary justice for burglars. If I saw him late at night, canvassing in my driveway, I'd certainly wonder where I'd put that Olympic '22 calibre handgun.

Mr Sweeney is a fan of yet another Welshman, Michael Howard, who is presenting his Bill for banning everyone up for

ever. Harrying him from argument to clause is my final Welshman, Alex Carlile (Liberal Democrat, Montgomery). Mr Carlile is retiring at the next election, and that is the only sense in which he is retiring, in every other way – with his curling lip and glasses halfway down his nose – he is wonderfully arrogant. For every smooth elision of Howards, Mr Carlile has the answer. If the government had thought sentences too lenient, how many had the Attorney-General appealed to have increased? No reply. Weren't some criminals going to have less supervision and shorter sentences as a result of the proposed legislation? Apparently so. We will miss Mr Carlile.

significant shorts

Tories reject Brussels ban on leaded fuel

A European Commission proposal to ban leaded petrol from the end of 1999 is to be opposed by the Government.

The Commission strategy for reducing emissions from cars from 2000 was discussed by environment ministers last month, and agreement is expected next June.

But the transport minister, John Bowis, has told MPs that it is "unnecessary and inefficient to impose a ban on leaded petrol as proposed".

While the aim of reducing leaded petrol sales was "laudable", Mr Bowis said in a memorandum for the Commons European

Legislation Committee that the British had over the last seven years used preferential taxation to promote leadless petrol sales.

That had contributed to a reduction in airborne lead of over 70 per cent. *Anthony Bowis*

Drunken plane brawl may cost dear

A father and son who forced a holiday flight from Tenerife to Birmingham to divert after a mid-air brawl could face a bill of thousands of pounds from the airline.

The father, Michael, Mr Rogers, from Blackpool, from Yorkshire, was expected to leave the Portuguese capital, Lisbon, last night with his son after being denied a seat on AirAsia flight 100 to London on Friday.

A company spokesman described it as a "minor dispute" and said it had been "resolved".

He added that they would be liable for the amount of fuel of the extra fuel that had to be burned off for the plane to land in London.

The 200 other passengers on the plane were forced to endure a four-hour delay.

Youth held fake gun to boy's head

A 15-year-old youth has been accused of making threats to kill after an imitation gun was held to the head of a pupil in a school brawl.

The youth, now at college, will appear before Birmingham youth court next month after a fight between three pupils at a school in Acocks Green last week.

He will face charges of making threats to kill and possessing an imitation firearm.

Dead addict feigned illness

A policeman told an inquest yesterday that he thought a prisoner found dead in a cell had been feigning illness before his death.

PC David Ennis said he believed Leon Patterson, 31, had been trying to evade being interviewed over a shop robbery for which he had been arrested.

Patterson, a heroin addict, was found dead at Denton police station, Greater Manchester, four years ago.

A jury at an earlier inquest said that Patterson, of north London, had been unlawfully killed and that he should have been transferred to a prison hospital. It had heard the cause of death was "uncertain".

But the police overturned the verdict in the High Court, which ordered a new hearing. Patterson's family allege he was beaten by officers. The inquest is expected to last two weeks.

Gates warns party leaders on UK visit

Bill Gates, the multi-billionaire head of Microsoft, the world's biggest software company, met John Major and Tony Blair in separate meetings yesterday during a 36-hour visit to the United Kingdom. According to Microsoft, he spoke to the two party leaders about the importance of government and business working together to improve the use of computers and the Internet, both in schools and in business.

But he warned that British businesses are not taking full advantage of the Internet, and could lose ground to international rivals. Politicians on the island are concerned that the Government is doing nothing to combat high unemployment. They would like to make the island a free port and tax haven to boost investment. *Steve Boggan*

Isle of Wight favours poll on self-rule

A majority of residents of the Isle of Wight favour holding a referendum on self-government, according to a Mori poll for the island's county council.

Seventy-three per cent said they would be in favour of the referendum – but most also said they would vote against independence. Politicians on the island are concerned that the Government is doing nothing to combat high unemployment. They would like to make the island a free port and tax haven to boost investment. *Steve Boggan*

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BACK ISSUES

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Mayhew dampens Unionist talks fear

David McKittrick
Ireland Correspondent

Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, last night sought to calm Unionist concerns over a conduit for talks which it has opened with Sinn Fein by insisting that the Government was saying nothing in private that it was not already saying in public.

Speculation yesterday centred on the immediate and long-term intentions of the IRA, the implications of any new ceasefire for political talks, and Unionist suspicions that the government might contemplate a deal with the republicans.

It what amounted to key government characterisation of the channel of communication, which involves the SDLP leader John Hume. Sir Patrick said: "If somebody represents to us that a restatement of our policy, in language that is clear and unequivocal would be helpful, then we will obviously want to consider that."

Sir Patrick's comments did not succeed in dispelling distrust within David Trimble's Ulster Unionist party, and were greeted with disbelief by the Rev Ian Paisley. A spokesman for the UUP, Jeffrey Donaldson said: "Given the evidence of the weekend, we would be very suspicious that there is a form of tick-tacking going on between government and Sinn Fein."

Whether it's through Mr Hume or other intermediaries one cannot be sure.

Mr Paisley said: "The more they say they are not involved the more I think they are, because they have lied so much in the past. It seems to me an attempt is being made to buy off the threat of violence in Northern Ireland and the mainland by getting concessions to the IRA-Sinn Fein so that they can find an easy way into the talks."

It's going to be another colossal sell-out and another colossal conditioning of the people to accept IRA-Sinn Fein on their terms."

But at the same time as the talk of contacts filled the air, the new RUC Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, delivered the latest in a series of police warnings that more "spectacular" IRA attacks were to be expected in Ulster and in Britain.

He added, however, that he believed an internal debate was going on within the republican movement. On reports that a full-scale IRA "army convention" had been held at the weekend, he was less sure than some security sources have been of late, commenting: "I think there was a meeting of sorts I am not going to say it was a convention."

In Irish Taoiseach, John Bruton, said he knew nothing of an IRA convention, but believed serious rethinking was going on within republicanism.



A day in the life: Keith from Skipton with his portrait at the '30 Days 30 lives' exhibition by photographer Barry Cawston which opens today for two weeks at the Candid Gallery, Islington, north London. The YMCA commissioned the series to illustrate its work with young adults

Photograph: John Lawrence

Six crucial facts about the fax machine you're about to buy

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Group 'undermined entire bank system'

Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

face up to seven years in jail when they are sentenced next month.

Judge Jeffrey Rivlin QC, said: "The conspirators had dreams of realising vast amounts of money while running into hundreds of millions of pounds."

The criminals had intended to bribe BT workers to tap into the lines that run between cash dispensers and the main banking computers. Confidential information from customers would have been downloaded using computer equipment, decrypted and used to make thousands of bogus cards. These would then be used to withdraw money from cash points throughout the world.

The court heard that the conspiracy was foiled when a computer expert turned informant, Martin Grant was recruited by the gang while serving 16 years for attempting to murder his wife and her child.

Grant, who is one of Britain's most wanted men and is currently in hiding abroad, was named in court as an important associate of the team of senior underworld figures.

Seven men yesterday admitted conspiracy to steal cash from banks, building societies and financial institutions and

tending waiting lists or other cutbacks £300m extra is needed.

If these assessments prove accurate patients needing non-urgent surgery, such as hip replacements, would see their appointments deferred and the length of time they have to wait for their operations increased.

Community care would also suffer. Hospital trusts would postpone paying their suppliers and put off planned building work.

But health trusts will try to

sustain accident and emergency services and ambulances are unlikely to be turned away. "Trusts providing acute care are acutely aware of the political sensitivities," said one manager cryptically.

Health trusts cannot end the year in deficit so, failing any increase in their budgets, they would be obliged to make savings in the five months that are left. Many trusts have already exceeded the budgets for treatment of 1996-97, if they continue to treat patients at current

rates, they run into the red. Though still only partially complete a survey of NHS trusts conducted jointly by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Health Financial Managers' Association has found a third reporting a very difficult situation.

According to health analysts the root cause of this is the Government's decision to base the £33bn (for England) NHS budget on its estimate of spending rather than what trusts and authorities had spent by March

last. Some experts say the system started the year £180m short of what it needed to maintain last year's care.

After allowing for inflation, the amount of real growth in NHS spending for 1996-97 was minimal, which contradicted the Government's promise of growth.

Professor Chris Ham, of Birmingham University, an expert on health finance, said: "Needs and demand have continued growing, so it is not surprising that hospitals are running into serious problems."

Old will bear brunt of NHS shortfall

David Walker

Old people, the mentally ill and the disabled are those who will have to bear the brunt of any shortfall in health funding, health managers said yesterday.

The National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts has estimated English trusts need at least £200m less than 1 per cent of total NHS spending, to see them through to the end of the financial year in March. The NHS Trust Federation says that to avoid ex-

cessive waiting lists or other cutbacks £300m extra is needed.

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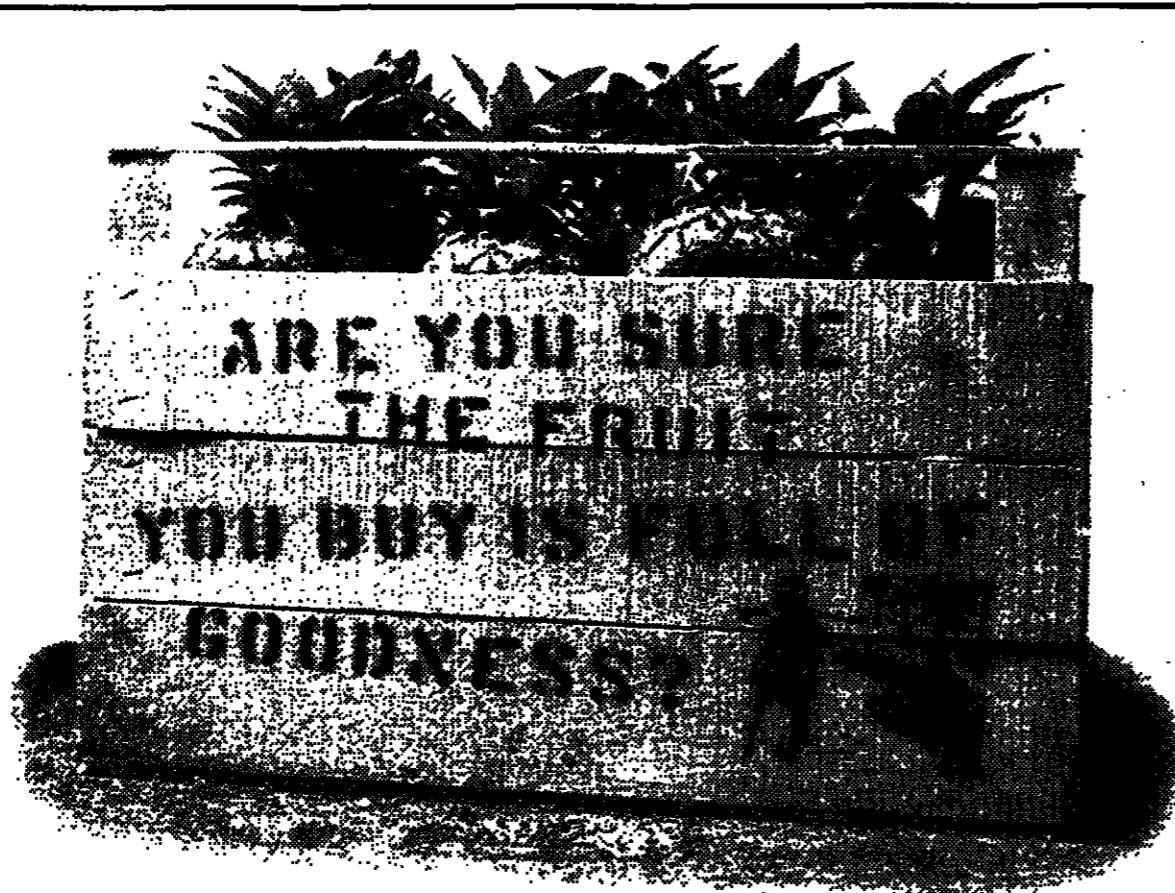
Firs
across
the
Cham

So new
letter's

news



House music: Members of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra giving a recital in the sitting room of Heather Kemp's council home in Hastings, East Sussex, as part of an initiative by the local council to increase awareness of classical music. Photograph: Andrew Hasson



"I saw an accident when a friend fell from the truck taking us to the plantation. The tyre ran over his leg and he was sent to the company dispensary. They amputated his leg. He got no compensation and had to buy a plastic leg with his own money. The man has not worked since the accident." PINEAPPLE PLANTATION WORKER, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Amputation without compensation in the pineapple industry of the Dominican Republic.

Dismissal for not working overtime in the grape industry of Brazil.

The fruit in your supermarket trolley may look wholesome and appetising, but there's often something rotten inside.

The misery beneath the clingfilm

It doesn't stop at fruit. There are heart-rending stories of exploitation behind produce like vegetables, nuts, flowers, coffee, even prawns.

The details vary, but the themes are consistent enough: low pay, tin-shack housing, unfair dismissal, child labour.

It makes you angry and it makes you want to do something. Well you can.

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A boycott isn't the answer because it

can make things even worse for the growers and pickers by taking away the market. And in any case, you can't always tell just by looking which products involve exploitation and which don't.

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Court told of official's 'Pretty Woman' relationship

The taxman, the hooker and a love story

Graham Bell

A senior Inland Revenue official became so besotted with an escort agency woman that he lavished thousands of pounds of gifts on her, including designer clothes, expensive watches and Mediterranean holidays, an Old Bailey court was told yesterday.

Michelle Corrigan, a former model, was giving evidence in the trial of Michael Alcock, an Inland Revenue inspector who is accused of taking bribes.

Miss Corrigan said she was introduced to Mr Alcock, a married man, by Hisham Alwan, an oil dealer with whom she used to have sex for money.

"He asked me if I'd be interested in meeting one of his friends and I said yes. I didn't have a name but was told that he was English," she said. She met Mr Alwan at an apartment in Maida Vale, north-west London, where he gave her a white envelope containing £200. He then introduced her to the tax inspector and left. After the first meeting Mr Alcock contacted Miss Corrigan and arranged to see her again.

She said that at the second meeting Mr Alcock was dropped off at the Maida Vale address in Mr Alwan's Mercedes. John Black, for the prosecution, has told the court that Mr Alcock had previously investigated Mr Alwan's tax affairs.

Mr Alcock, 47, Mr Alwan and David Shamoun, a wealthy

property developer, deny 17 charges of corruption.

Miss Corrigan said that she met Mr Alcock in Maida Vale about 12 more times and on each occasion Mr Alcock gave her money for sex. "Every time I met him he gave me a cheque or cash, sometimes £130, sometimes £200 but it was usually about £200," she said.

The jury was shown a cheque for £3,000 signed by Mr Alcock in 1990 to benefit Miss Corrigan. She said that the money was to help her to buy a car. "I bought a Peugeot 205GT and Mr Alcock also helped me to pay for the insurance," she said.

At one point in their relationship it was alleged that Mr Alcock used his influence with



Michael Alcock: 'Became besotted'

Miss Corrigan to arrange a woman for Christopher Furze, a junior colleague, and that Miss Corrigan slept with Mr Alcock and Mr Furze slept with the other woman.

However, over a period of months a relationship developed from being that of one between a prostitute and a client to one that could better be described as an affair. This development occurred around the time that Mr Alcock took Miss Corrigan on the first of two holidays in September 1991. The couple first stayed at a luxury villa close to the Marbella beach club in southern Spain. Later they enjoyed another luxury break in Majorca.

The court was told Mr Alcock also paid £1,500 for six months' rent for Miss Corrigan's flat in Portsmouth and cleared a £1,000 credit card debt.

The jury was shown a receipt for £675 for a watch bought by Mr Alcock for Miss Corrigan in December 1991.

Mr Black asked her to describe some of the other gifts she received from the tax inspector, whose salary at the time of his suspension was £45,000. She said: "He bought me clothes, shoes, make-up, coats. They were generally designer outfits costing between £300 and £600. He also bought me a coat for £400 from Harvey Nichols."

Mr Black has claimed that the money to finance these gifts came from "ghosts", wealthy foreign businessmen who had paid Mr Alcock to conclude favourable tax settlements.

Miss Corrigan said that throughout their relationship, which lasted approximately three years, she did not know what Mr Alcock did for a living and believed that he was a financial adviser. Just prior to the end of their affair in 1992 she said Mr Alcock told her he was putting money away for their future. She said: "I started looking at properties in the Portsmouth area, I thought we were in love."

Anthony Aridge, QC, for the defence, compared Mr Alcock's affair with Miss Corrigan to the plot line of the Hollywood film *Pretty Woman*, and Miss Corrigan agreed with Mr Aridge when he said that while the couple began in a client and prostitute relationship they quickly fell in love.

Miss Corrigan, a tall slender figure, was wearing a bright green jacket and matching green miniskirt. She said that she did not consider herself a prostitute. She said: "I consider a prostitute as someone hanging around on a street corner and advertising in phone boxes. I was introduced to these people and they would give me money. That is not the same as hanging around on the corner of the street looking for it. I was quite happy to sit there talking to him. I did not want to dive in, take my clothes off and jump on top of him."

The trial continues tomorrow.

Michelle Corrigan: Given many gifts

Ornate tables and chairs were among many items taken from the churches while they were open to the public.

The recent theft of a 19th-century dark oak chair worth £1,500 taken from St Mary's at Molland, near South Molton, North Devon, was the latest in a series of raids on four parish churches under the Rev Bob Shorter.

Thieves had struck five times in three years at his four churches on the edge of Exmoor, taking furniture including a captain's chair, two Victorian side-tables and a Victorian chest of drawers, together worth hundreds of pounds.

Some of the items stolen from the churches in north and mid-Devon may have been sold

"It does rather appear that thieves are coming looking for stuff that they presumably have a market for. Churches are

abroad, particularly to the United States, the Devon and Cornwall police believe.

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DAILY POEM

One of the first poems to be written underneath the English Channel or maybe the first.

By Adrian Mitchell

The bones of galleons and their wide-eyed crews,
Haunted by jelly-fish and purple mussels –
They're overhead, stuck in historic oaze –
As our train mumbles through the dark to Brussels.

Coming Back Again

As our train mumbles through the dark from Brussels –
They're overhead, stuck in historic oaze –
Haunted by jelly-fish and purple mussels –
The bones of galleons and their wide-eyed crews.

Adrian Mitchell's *Collected Poems* (Bloodaxe) were published at the end of last month, amongst them this short poem written on the Eurostar just 10 days before publication. Mitchell made his reputation in the late 1960s as performance poet of what used to be referred to as "agitprop". His most nakedly political poems – about nuclear war, Vietnam, prisons and racism – became part of the folklore of the Left, sung and recited at demonstrations and mass rallies. But there has always been a softer, more fantastical side to his output, and his ability to re-experience the world as a child is a rare gift.

"Break-ins can hit small village communities very hard – it's rather like an assault on them."

In Suffolk the police published a crime-prevention booklet for vicars and church wardens following a spate of thefts. Since improvements to security the number of break-ins has fallen dramatically.

Country churches were a favourite target for antique and furniture thieves, said Brian King, of Ecclesiastical Insurance, which covers 95 per cent of Anglican churches.

"Since the 1970s antiques prices have rocketed, therefore churches have been attracted thieves' attention as being a good source," he said. Much of what was taken was sold abroad. Attacks on churches had risen, with insurance premiums rising from £3m in 1989 to £4.5m by 1992. Mr Shorter recommended security marking and photographing valuables; putting fakes on display instead of the originals, or locking them away altogether.

news

Jail escorts free drug dealer after threat of being injected with Aids-infected blood, a new tactic increasingly used by criminals

Deadly hypodermics become new shotguns

Alan Murdoch
Dublin

The escape from prison at the weekend of a drug dealer whose brother was a notorious gang leader saw the use of one of the Aids-era's more sinister weapons - a blood-filled syringe.

Syringes filled with blood have been used in dozens of inner-city Dublin robberies in recent years according to police. Criminals frequently claim the blood is Aids-infected when threatening their victims.

Michael Cahill, 33, the

younger brother of Martin Cahill, the late Dublin gang leader known as The General who was murdered by the IRA in August 1994, escaped from a garda van outside Dublin on Sunday.

A heroin addict, he was serving a four-and-a-half-year sentence for a drugs conviction. He was being moved, handcuffed to a warder, to Cork Prison from Mountjoy in Dublin following a disturbance there on Saturday evening.

The Department of Justice yesterday began an inquiry into

the escape, which occurred when Cahill reportedly held the syringe against the head of one of the prison officers in the van and shouted: "He has a wife and kids, **** it, I will give it to him!"

The unarmed officers released him and he ran into traffic and tried, unsuccessfully, to hijack a car before fleeing into the night.

The inquiry will try to establish how the syringe was taken into the van, and whether Saturday's fracas at Mountjoy was staged to facilitate the transfer.



Lethal, and small: Syringes are hard for warders to detect

A few months ago another prisoner made his escape from a courthouse by using a syringe to threaten gardai, and in April another Dublin criminal, Thomas "Bomber" Clarke, also escorted by unarmed warders,

escaped from a prison van when gunmen rammed it.

Chris Finnegan, national secretary of the Garda Federation, said "more than 10" gardai

had been stabbed with syringes, though none had so far tested

HIV-positive as a result.

A colleague "went through a terrible torment for some time [while awaiting the result of an Aids test]. It's more frightening than an actual weapon. They [syringes] have now become the preferred way of doing jump-overs [cash robberies in shops]."

Mr Finnegan estimated the use of syringes in robberies and other crimes had been increasing steadily for five or six years.

The most common victims,

and the experience has led some north inner-city Dublin

shop-owners to close businesses.

Other victims included two Italian tourists who were held up by a syringe-wielding thief who broke into their room in a luxurious hotel late at night.

Mr Finnegan called for armed gardai in a follow-up car to shadow prison vans in the same way as large cash consignments were escorted. He said it appeared no security lessons had been learned from the earlier Clarke escape.

Liz O'Donnell, justice spokeswoman of the opposition Progressive Democrats, said

there had been 11 escapes from this year and demanded tighter security. She said the justice minister, Nora Owen, should explain how the prisoner got the syringe into the van, when there should have been a search.

A spokesman for Ireland's Prison Officers Association called for pepper gas and mace to be provided to prison escorts and for shackles to be used in transporting dangerous prisoners. Routine searches did not deal with the threat as prisoners had repeatedly concealed syringes inside the body, he said.

Students denied choice by A-level disputes

Judith Judd
Education Editor

Universities should wait six weeks before rejecting applicants who want to appeal against their A-level grades, the head of the independent body on exam appeals said yesterday.

At present, universities accept and reject candidates in August, as soon as A-level results are published.

But Dame Elizabeth Anson, chairman of the Independent Appeals Authority for School Examinations, said exam boards had been trying to persuade universities to wait until the end of September before rejecting candidates who had missed their grades but who were appealing. "Even if you appeal as quickly as you can, you still cannot get your place at university because it is all settled," she said.

The authority, which is the final arbiter of exam grade appeals, heard five appeals last year and allowed three of them. Its annual report published yesterday. Two A-level appeals in computing and history were allowed, and one in GCSE history.

The number of appeals against exam grades is growing rapidly but they reach the authority only if students are not satisfied after they have appealed to exam boards.

Authority officials believe it is only a matter of time before a board is sued for damages because a pupil has been denied his or her first choice of university.

Dame Elizabeth said they were still worried about delays by both schools and boards in dealing with complaints, meaning that appeals did not reach the authority until 10 months after the results were published. "The whole process is a marathon that only the most determined schools complete."

This year's report includes details of an appeal from a school which found that its coursework assessments for GCSE business studies had been reduced by nearly 40 per cent. The exam board said the school had been warned previously that it was not assessing coursework correctly. The authority found that the warning had not been clear enough and the appeal was allowed.

The authority may face a shake-up because of the amalgamation of the two bodies in charge of academic and vocational qualifications in the Education Bill which is going through the Commons. At present, it does not hear appeals for vocational exams.

■ Ministers yesterday announced plans to tighten up the grading of vocational A-levels and cut down bureaucracy.

Happiness of the long-distance traveller as the sun goes down on the fly and flop holiday

Simon Calder in Istanbul hears that cheaper flights are hitting traditional tourist resorts

British tourists are turning their backs on the beaches, particularly among Mediterranean holiday resorts. Travel agents were told yesterday that 1 million fewer "fly and flop" European beach holidays were sold this summer. Greece, Malta and Cyprus are suffering especially compared with more exotic destinations. And among skiers, France and Austria are being overhauled as the most popular winter sports destinations by Italy.

The Istanbul convention of the Association of British Travel Agents heard that holidaymakers are extending their horizons dramatically. The market research organisation Stats MR says United Kingdom visitors to Mexico have more than trebled over the past year, and bookings for next year are already twice as high again. In contrast, Cyprus lost one in five British holidaymakers last winter and is 11 per cent down on bookings for the coming winter.

Recent violence on the Green Line separating the Republic from the self-styled Turkish Republic of North Cyprus may have contributed to the decline. But Len Mooney of the tour operator Sunworld said the trend towards long-haul travel is responsible: "Cyprus is suffering from cheaper long-haul holidays, particularly in the Caribbean."

Price remains the prime concern of British tourists. The only leading destination to buck the trend of a declining package holiday market this summer was Turkey. It added 15 per cent in visitor numbers, compared with a fall of 24 per cent for Greece. This week, Turkey was revealed to be the cheapest of all 20 OECD countries for tourists, with the cost of holidaymaking just after that of the UK. The local currency is so weak that British visitors can become lira millionaires simply by changing £6.50.

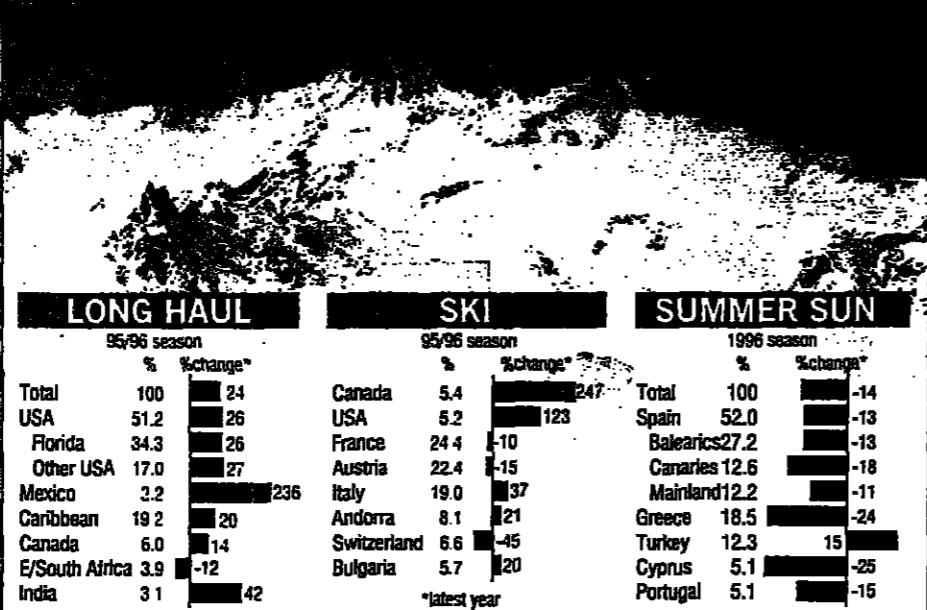
Among skiers, price is also crucial. Bookings for the coming winter show Italy ahead of the traditional destinations, France and Austria. Bulgaria is performing strongly - with nearly double the number of bookings compared with last year - while Switzerland has lost almost half its market share.

Overall, numbers of winter sports holidays are a quarter lower than at the peak eight years ago, but Kevin Ivis of First Choice said the decline has now reversed: "Snow-boarding has helped to bring young people into the market."

Travellers' perceptions of risk have affected some parts of the world significantly. Florida has



Trading places: The table below shows holidays to destinations such as India (above) are rising while those to the Mediterranean are falling. Photographs: John Voss/David Rose



not yet recovered from the spate of attacks on tourists three years ago. Southern and Eastern Africa lost one in eight British visitors mostly because of a decline in tourism to Kenya. Conversely, India appears once again to be perceived

as "safe", with an increase of 42 per cent in the past year.

One tour operator warned of the dangers of trying to cash in on the rise of exotic holidays. Roger Heape of British Airways Holidays told: "Don't trash the market - don't do what you

did to the short-haul market."

The travel industry got a taste of its own medicine after the convention closed yesterday. Several delegates turned up at Istanbul airport to find the British Airways flight to Heathrow was overbooked.

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Judith Judd

Families have lost £3 a week since the election

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The average council-house family has lost more than £3 a week in net income since the last election, according to the latest calculations from Whitehall.

The figures, in a Department of Social Security *Abstract of Statistics*, belie Treasury propaganda that the average family is £700 a year better off than the last election. Claim and counter-claim about family prosperity is a key battleground for the election as the Tories try to persuade voters they are significantly better off and should not risk Labour ruining that new-found wealth.

Michael Jack, a Treasury minister, said in a written Commons reply: "Real take-home pay for a one-earner family on average earnings was £292 per week in 1991-92, and is expected to rise to £305 per week in 1996-97.

"The 1996-97 income of a family on average earnings is up £700 a year after the effects of tax and inflation when compared with that of 1991-92."

The Treasury reply could contain a number of flaws: the year 1991-92 does not give an accurate definition of the timing of the last election, and average earnings for 1996-97 can only be "expected" because the year does not end until March.

However, the *Abstract of Statistics* provides actual figures for average earnings in April 1992, at the time of the last election, and last April. It shows a gross increase of £50.10p per week to £390.20 over the four years of John Major's government.

In real terms, after inflation has been taken into account, the increase is £14.08, or £732.16 a year before tax. After tax that increase is certain to be much less. For a one-earner family with two children living in council housing, with an average weekly pay slip of £390.20, net income last April was £253.28 a week - compared with the real-terms figure of £256.49 in April 1992 - after housing costs had been deducted. That official DSS calculation includes average council-housing rent, council tax, income tax, national insurance contributions, and

a full claim for any available benefits. That family was not better off last April than it was at the last election.

On the same basis, a single mother with one child, working on average women's earnings of £280.70 a week last April - is £4.29 a week worse off, in real terms, after housing costs, than in April 1992. The Government's General Household Survey shows one-fifth of all households live in council or new-town rented housing.

Another 40 per cent of households have mortgages and there is no doubt that many will be considerably better off as a result of mortgage interest rate cuts, which have reduced annual payments on a £25,000 mortgage by about £1,340 a year since the last election. But that bonus has to be offset by the reduction in the rate at which the tax allowance on mortgage interest at source is paid. Its reduction by the present government from 25 per cent to 15 per cent has cost the average mortgage payer about £500 a year.

The Conservatives possibly prefer to use 1991-92 as their base line for "feel-good" calculations because there was a significant surge in net income between 1991-92 and 1992-93. Labour however uses 1992-93 as its base year, possibly because that more than halves the net increase in living standards, from the Tories' £700 to little more than £300 a year for the average family, after pay rises, taxes and prices have been taken into account.

Labour pointed out yesterday that the average family - with one earner on average earnings and two children - was £2.56 a week worse off last year, when compared with 1992-93, after inflation had been taken into account. A Labour spokesman pointed to the Treasury's own figures, showing that that family's net income, after all taxes and benefits, was £296.78p a week in 1995-96 compared with an equivalent in real terms of £299.34 a week in 1992-93.

On that basis, it would appear the average family was worse off whether they lived in rented council housing or whether they had a mortgage.

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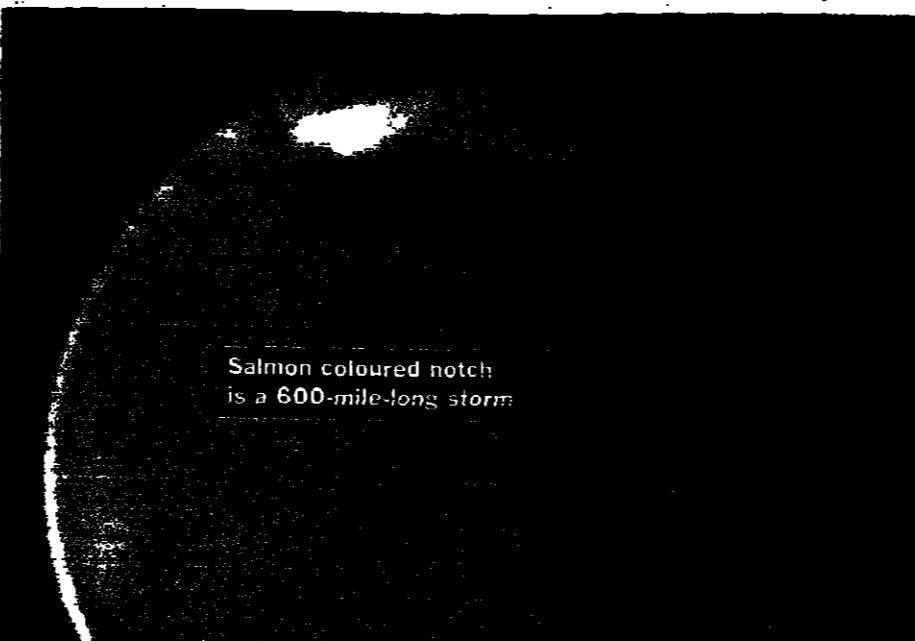


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If there is life on Mars, they're having a rough time



Salmon-coloured notch
is a 600-mile-long storm



Storm dissipates through
comma-shaped dust cloud

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

If there is life on Mars, as British scientists suggested last week, then it must be used to bad weather. New pictures taken a month apart by the Hubble Space Telescope, show

storms churning the planet's red dust near the north polar cap.

The picture on the left, taken in mid-September, shows a salmon-coloured notch in the white north polar cap: a storm 600 miles long. The bright dust can also be seen over the dark surface surrounding

the cap, where it is caught up in the Martian jet stream and blown east.

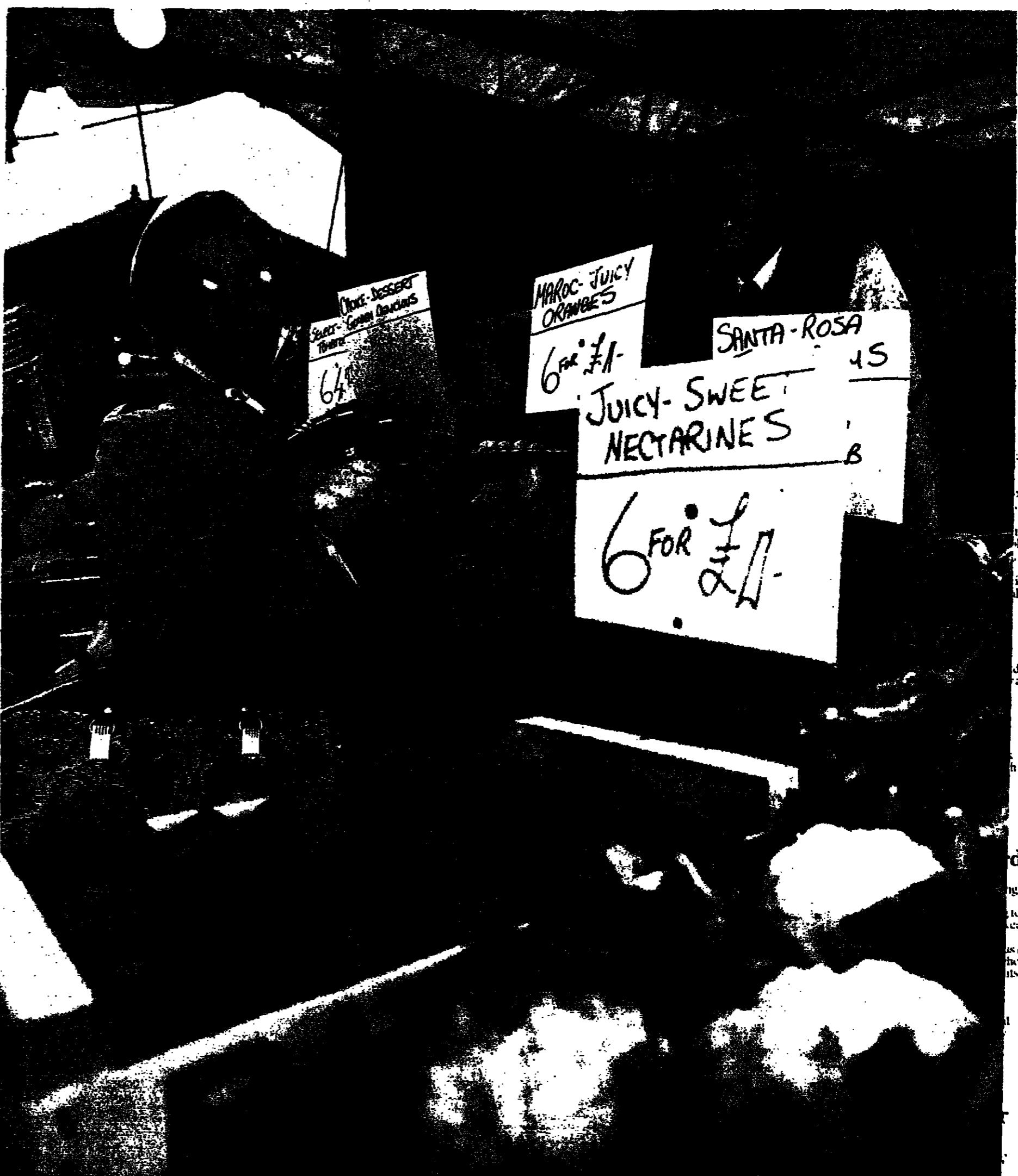
The picture on the right, taken in mid-October, shows that the storm has dissipated, though a comma-shaped cloud of dust can be seen curving across the ice cap. The shape is similar to cold fronts on Earth,

associated with low-pressure systems. But nothing quite like this has been seen on Mars before.

Scientists have thought that life is more likely to be found near the polar regions, which though cooler, have abundant water.

The polar storm is probably

caused by large temperature differences between the polar ice and the dark regions to the south, heated by the springtime sun. The sun also makes the frozen carbon dioxide in the polar cap evaporate. In the second picture, the cap's edge has receded by about 120 miles.



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Texas, the easiest place on the planet to vote

AUSTIN — Election day has arrived. I'll cycle to my precinct's polling place at the local elementary school today, present my voter registration card, choose from several identical ballots arrayed on a table, go to a private cubicle, pick up the special soft-leaded pencil and start filling in the ovals. That's what all the fuss has been about for the last 10 weeks, if not four years.

An interesting wrinkle is that I could show up with no identification, say I was someone else, and if the name matched the list of registered voters, I would be given a ballot. The poll workers are not there to stop people from voting, said a local election official. "Any fraud would be determined later." By whom, I wonder.

First on my ballot is the chance to cast a straight-party vote, choosing Republican, Democratic, Libertarian, Natural Law or US Taxpayers. The three non-mainstream parties are a mystery to most voters. The Libertarian Party, one of the country's most viable third parties along with Ross Perot's Reform Party, wants government out of all aspects of life, except the military, police and prisons, and would eliminate income tax. The Natural Law Party believes good government can be achieved through science and Transcendental Meditation. The US Taxpayers Party, just four years old, courted Pat Buchanan as its presidential candidate because of his ultra-conservative views.

If I skip the straight-party option, my first vote is for president and vice-president. I can

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

96

The big day has arrived at last, reports Elaine Davenport

write in a name in this category, meaning that I can add a name — any name — of my choice on the line provided. The Texas polls are showing a statistical dead-heat between Bill Clinton and Bob Dole. That the race should be this close is unusual in a state that has not given its 35 electoral votes (only California, with 54, and New York, with 33, have more) to a

Democrat since Jimmy Carter was elected in 1976. Then I make a choice for a US senator. Most agree that Phil Gramm, Republican, who is 22 per cent ahead in the polls over Victor Morales, Democrat, will win. But if Republicans stay home because Bob Dole is behind in the presidential polls, Mr Gramm may lose his edge. However, Latinos — a record 1.6

million are registered this year in Texas — are said to have a higher-than-usual interest. In Mr Morales' historic bid to become the state's first Latino senator, and a greater percentage than usual may vote. On the other hand, Mr Clinton's lead in the national polls may keep Democrats at home. To encourage Democrats, Mr Clinton spent two days last week cam-

paing in El Paso and San Antonio, cities with large Latino populations.

Whichever party I choose for president and US senator theoretically will pull me through the rest of the ballot as I vote for a US representative, state offices, judges, state board of education and county offices.

Texas has a record high number of registered voters this year — more than 10 million. Election officials say that here in Travis County, 96 per cent of eligible adults are registered. This high number is due to the National Voter Registration Act — known as "motor voter" — which began in 1995 and has allowed voters to register at driver's licence locations and other state offices. Also, activists have spent recent years begging and prodding the state's minorities to register.

But registration is one thing and voting is another. Volunteers for the parties and candidates will spend today on the phone reminding registered voters to go to the polls or providing transportation.

"It's easier to vote in Texas than anywhere else on the planet," said Nelda Weis Spears, the county's Voter Registrar. Early voting by mail was available for anyone disabled, over 65, in jail or who would be out of the county for the entire early voting period and on election day.

Early voting in person (no need to provide a reason, as in some other states) was available for 17 days at 16 locations in the county, including one drive-through for the physically challenged, where a sign read "Just Hook and We'll Be Out To Serve You".



Spitting image: Masked voters cheer Bob Dole on his California tour. Photograph: Reuter

SAMPLE BALLOT (BOLETA DE MUESTRA)

TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

GENERAL ELECTION
(ELECCION GENERAL)

STATE REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 10 John, David of Cedar Park, Texas, 78613 Perry, Cindy of Austin, Texas, 78744 United, Eddie, Mike of Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Tom Price (REP)
Patricia McNamee (DEM)
Sharon, Diane, State Rep. of Cedar Park, Texas, 78734 Adams, Dr. John, State Rep. of Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Charlie Wenzel (REP)
Walt Davis (DEM)
Catherine L. Prida (DEM)
Steve Shaver, State Rep. of Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Connie Bentzen (DEM)
Debra L. Stodel (DEM)
State Representative, District 44 Reynolds, Michael of Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Edith Moninger (REP)
Elliot Natale (DEM)
STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL Perry, John, State Atty. Gen. of Texas, Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Tom Phillips (REP)
Andrew Jackson Kappas (DEM)
David Parker (DEM)
Justine, Barbara, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
John Conroy (REP)
Patricia Bassett (DEM)
Theresa Galt (DEM)
Judith, Barbara, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
James A. Baker (REP)
Gene Kelly (DEM)
Elaine Pomer (DEM)
Justine, Barbara, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734 Gonzales, Adelmo, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
John Abbott (DEM)
John R. Hancey (DEM)
Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals, Panel 2 Gonzales, Adelmo, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Victor K. Morrissey (DEM)
Michael Red (DEM)
John Hoff (DEM)
Bob Parker (DEM)
Judge, Court of Criminal Appeals, Panel 1 Gonzales, Adelmo, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
John H. McCall (DEM)
Miles L. Lynch (DEM)
District Judge, 20th Judicial District Gonzales, Adelmo, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Paul Davis (DEM)
District Judge, 34th Judicial District Gonzales, Adelmo, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
Scott McClellan (DEM)
Victor, Judge, 35th Judicial District Gonzales, Adelmo, State Atty. Gen., Cedar Park, Texas, 78734
John Orrell (DEM)
Margaret Cooper (DEM)

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Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The outcome of this year's Congressional races is awaited nowhere more anxiously than Wall Street. Some of the top pundits on the Street have warned that if the Democrats gain control of Congress it will mark the end of one of the longest and biggest bull runs in stockmarket history.

The concern is that if Democrats regain control of key Congressional committees, government would fall back into bad spending habits even if the White House clings to the rhetoric of the balanced budget.

"I think the market would react very badly to a Democratic majority," said Byron Wien, a strategist at New York investment bank Morgan Stanley.

"There is a legitimate worry that the likelihood of deficit-enhancing legislation would be increased."

Lower long-term interest rates due to progress on the deficit have helped take the Dow Jones index past the 5,000 and the 6,000 barriers during the past 12 months. Share prices have doubled since Mr Clinton took office, and have climbed 140 per cent in six years.

However, caution voices on Wall Street think the fears of a post-election crash are exaggerated and any decline in share prices would only be short-lived. Abby Cohen, at investment bank Goldman Sachs, said yesterday: "The Clinton Administration has a record of following a tight fiscal policy, and what's more they are proud of it."

Yeltsin ready for surgery

President Boris Yeltsin's

condition is good enough for

heart surgery at any time,

doctors said in Moscow, but

refused to say when it would

be.

A doctors' statement

released by the Kremlin said

Mr Yeltsin's temperature,

pulse and blood pressure

were normal but gave no

other information and no

clues as to when the bypass

operation to improve the

blood supply to his heart

might take place.

The head of the Russian

Orthodox Church offered

prayers for Mr Yeltsin in

Kazan cathedral on Red

Square.

"Heal the illnesses, the

spiritual and corporeal

ailments of the president of

our Russian land, forgive

him his transgressions,

deliver him soon from his

sickbed and restore him to

good health," Patriarch

Alexy said. Moscow — Reuter

Mugabe tells

West to get lost

President Robert Mugabe

of Zimbabwe told Western

countries which criticised a

privatisation deal his

government signed with a

Malaysian company "to go

to hell". The power

producer YTL will invest

£300m in the privatisation of

Hwange Thermal Power

Station. Harare — Reuter

Armenia's

leader resigns

Armenia's Prime Minister,

Grant Bagratian, resigned

without giving a reason.

President Levon Ter-

Petrosian is expected to sign

an order putting his

resignation into effect this

week. "This is my own

business and that of the

president," said Mr

Bagratian, 38. Yerevan — AP

IN A WORLD

FOR DETAILS

VH-1

international

Romania finally turns out old guard

Adrian Bridge
Central Europe Correspondent

Almost seven years after toppling communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, Romanians have turned against the former communists who have ruled them since – thereby earning the distinction of being the last country in eastern Europe to do so.

With half the votes counted from Sunday's parliamentary election, the country was yesterday clearly heading for a centre-right government in what will be the first real transfer of power in Romania since Ceausescu fell in 1989.

In the parallel presidential

vote, the former communist incumbent, Ion Iliescu, emerged narrowly ahead, but fared far worse than expected. He now faces a tough battle in a second round run-off vote against his main rival, Emil Constantinescu, later this month.

As the scale of the former communists' defeat in the parliamentary poll became clear, there was jubilation at the headquarters of Mr Constantinescu's Democratic Convention (CDR), the party now set to lead a governing coalition.

After seven years of pseudo-democracy and neo-communist rule, the people realised that a total change was needed, declared Lucian Hossu, a leading member of the CDR.

"This is a natural reaction because all the promises turned out to be lies and people's lives became worse and worse."

According to the partial results, the CDR was poised to get some 30 per cent of the vote, well ahead of the 22 per cent registered by Mr Iliescu's Party of Social Democracy (PDSR).

As such, it looked to be well placed to form a government with the third placed centre-right Social Democratic Union headed by the pro-reform former Prime Minister Petre Roman.



People power: Emil Constantinescu, whose Democratic Convention is set to lead a governing coalition in Romania, in the mood to celebrate

Photograph: AFP



Ion Iliescu: faces tough battle in second round

Wind of change blows through the east

Tony Barber sees a resurgence of democracy throughout the region

resides in Bulgaria, voters sent a clear signal that they did not want the ex-Communists to dominate national politics.

Romania's parliamentary election was the first since the December 1989 revolution to result in a defeat for the remodelled Communists who assumed power after the execution of the Ceausescu. As expected, the centrist opposition Democratic Convention forms the core of the next government, it will mark a rare example in 20th-century Romanian history of power being freely and fairly transferred from a ruling party to its rivals.

In those terms, Lithuania's post-Communist progress is

more advanced than that of most countries in the region. Power swung after 1992 elections.

Peaceful political change achieved by the voters' will is becoming the norm in region

tions from the anti-Communist opposition to the reformed Communists, known as the De-

mocratic Labour Party (DLP), but last month two conservative parties inflicted electoral defeat on the DLP.

In 1993 and 1994, ex-Communists returned to power after elections in Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, and Poles last year elected Aleksander Kwasniewski, an ex-Communist, as president. Yet the Polish and Hungarian ex-Communists are keen economic reformers, committed to democracy, and determined to join NATO and the European Union.

The left-of-centre tide appeared to be flowing strongly last June, when Czech voters tilted to the opposition Social-Democrats and deprived Vaclav Klaus's centre-right coalition of its majority. At the time, some commentators regarded the result as the vot-

ers' revenge against Mr Klaus's strict free-market doctrines.

Yet the Czech Prime Minister's policies were often more gradualist than his Thatcherite rhetoric implied. This may explain why it took Czechs until this year to register complaints at the market reforms of the post-Communist age, whereas in Poland, where truly radical changes were thrust on the nation in January 1990, the reaction occurred as early as 1993.

In another election last weekend, Serbia's President, Slobodan Milosevic, and his leftist coalition appeared to coast to victory despite the best efforts of a newly united opposition. Mr Milosevic was helped by coverage on state television that praised him as a Balkan peacemaker and played down the opposition's campaign messages.

This year's most flawed elections took place last May in Albania and last September in Bosnia. Albania's ex-Communists, who had won power in 1991 and lost it one year later, boycotted the vote in May after accusing President Sali Berisha's centre-right Democratic Party of trying to fix the result.

The ex-Communists also complained about voting abuses in local elections last month, but international observers gave a much more favourable reaction than in May. The Bosnian elections were plagued by irregularities, including preliminary results that showed a turn-out of more than 100 per cent, but were certified as fair by an international community desperate not to jeopardise the Dayton peace deal.

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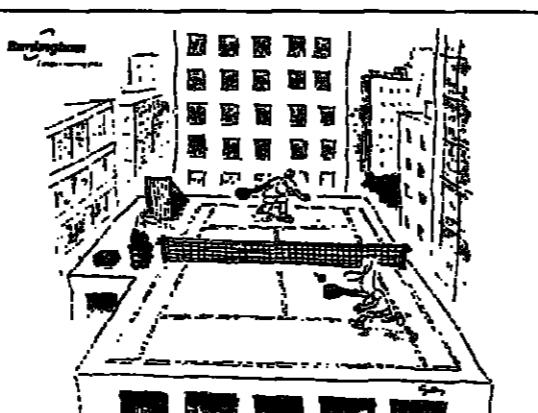
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international

Decline and fall of the men who tyrannised Africa

Grisly ex-dictator dies aged 75

James Roberts

Jean-Bedel Bokassa, who in the 1970s did as much for Africa's image in the world as Hitler did for Germany's, has died of a heart attack, aged 75. Yesterday thousands of mourners gathered outside the main hospital in the Central African Republic capital of Bangui to pay their last respects to a man who not only slaughtered his opponents but ate them too.

Raised by French missionaries after his father was murdered and his mother committed suicide, the cannibal emperor was something of a Francophile. He joined the French army at 18, was decorated for bravery, and chose Napoleon Bonaparte as a role model.

He seized power in 1966. In the 1970s Bokassa embarrassed the then French president, Giscard d'Estaing, by saying he had given him diamonds. Giscard said he sold the diamonds and gave the proceeds to charity but the affair tainted his image at home and possibly contributed to his defeat in the presidential election of 1981.

Bokassa lived in exile in France and Ivory Coast after his overthrow but returned in 1986 and was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted and he was released in September 1993.

Obituary, page 16



Mobutu leaves Swiss hide-out

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

The Zairean dictator, General Mobutu Sese Seko, pictured left, arrived in Nice yesterday after hours of speculation about whether he would leave Switzerland, where he has been recovering from an operation, and if he did, whether he would be allowed into France.

Although Mr Mobutu, who is 66, owns a villa on the Riviera near Monaco and a flat in Paris, he has, in effect, been *persona non grata* in France since 1994, though there have been clues this year that he has mended his relationship with President Chirac.

He was said to have looked tired when he left his hotel for Geneva airport. Hotel staff made a point of saying that he settled the bill before he left.

The Zairean leader, who is 66 and has been in power for 31 years, had been in Switzerland since August, where he was being treated for cancer of the prostate.

He had been operated on at the Lausanne University hospital but it is believed that he has stayed on in Switzerland because it was diplomatically convenient. If he returns to Zaire he faces severe difficulties in restoring order to the country.

French seeking summit on Zaire

Mary Dejevsky
Paris

In its first official response to the crisis in central Africa, France yesterday proposed an emergency international conference to discuss reinforcement of security "north and south of Kivu" in eastern Zaire.

The Foreign Minister, Hervé de Charette, said France wanted all its European and African "partners" to be represented, and the US and Canada. Any operation agreed would entail the dispatch of troops.

The proposal appeared to be a response to pressure from groups in France, including charities like Médecins sans Frontières, that Paris should not stand by as a region closely associated with French influence descended into chaos.

Mr de Charette made clear that in its urgency and the specific nature of the agenda, the meeting superseded, but did not replace, the conference on the region proposed last week by President Jacques Chirac.

But it also suggested an effort by France not to repeat past errors. Insistence that as many countries as possible should take part suggested concern that it should not seem to be acting unilaterally or trying to protect its own interests in a region where Francophone and Anglophone interests have long been in competition.

Since the crisis escalated last week, France has been cautious in its official statements. Partly, it may have been trying to lay to rest the mixed diplomatic reaction to Mr Chirac's recent outbursts in Israel. Mostly, however, French reticence is explained by its experience two years ago and the shadow of Operation Turquoise.

This was a military and aid operation, launched under French auspices from Zaire, to support Hema rebels in Rwanda — and pre-empt a return to power by the more Anglophone-inclined Tutsis.

Widely seen as having precipitated the mass killing of Tutsis and set off the refugee crisis which now threatens to explode, it earned France international opprobrium.

This time, France has been distinguished by reluctance to do or say anything until someone else has given a lead, and by its determination that any action should be organised and conducted with others.

Media comment has referred in broad-brush fashion to the events of two years ago as a foreign-policy error that did lasting damage.

And when the death of Jean-Bedel Bokassa, former ruler of the Central African Republic, was announced this morning, it was this disgraced relic of French Africa policy, and not the emergency in the Rwanda-Zaire border, that led national news bulletins.

France's decision to involve the US and Canada also suggests a desire to buy the hatches with Washington over Africa policy. Last month France and the US engaged in sniping

an Africa tour by the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher. France took umbrage at criticism by him of countries that saw themselves as having "reserved zones" in the continent, and the US objected to the Secretary of State's tour, his first in four years, being seen by France as an election ploy.

The specific nature of the French proposal — to discuss "enforcing security to the north and south of Kivu on a temporary basis by appropriate means" — is also significant.

Partly, it marks a recognition that order has to be brought to the area, if necessary by force, before there is any chance of a humanitarian aid operation being effective.



Hervé de Charette: Wants US involvement at talks

The focus on this region of Zaire, where the border has been breached, also implies France is keen to prevent any redrawing of the frontier — a solution favoured by some in Rwanda — and so to defend not only Zaire's territorial integrity but also the dignity of its current (and absent) leader, President Mobutu Sese Seko. Until yesterday he was variously reported to be living it up at Lausanne nightspots or to be at death's door from prostate cancer that had spread.

Mr Mobutu, *persona non grata* in France since the massacres in Rwanda two years ago, made a "private" visit to Paris in April and met Mr Chirac. His arrival late yesterday on the Côte d'Azur, where he has a villa, came amid concern about the effect of his lengthy absence on the stability of Zaire but it also suggested that some deal had been done with France, although there was no hint of what it might be.

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Conjuring tricks and pre-election treats

It seems such a straightforward political choice: money for tax cuts or for an underfunded NHS. With hospital trusts likely to go £300m into the red this year, the clamour for more health spending has begun. But Ken Clarke is resisting, insisting that spending must be squeezed – presumably to pay for pre-election tax cuts instead.

To be true to historical form, Labour should now be leaping up and down demanding more spending on the health service. The choice in the election would then be clear: vote Labour for higher taxes, doctors, nurses and hospital beds; vote Conservative for money in your pocket.

But it isn't as simple as that. For a start, Labour is not playing ball. There is indeed an immediate choice to be made between £300m to make up the hospitals' shortfall, and £300m towards cutting inheritance tax (for example). But proper health care versus tax cuts is not the most important trade-off – either in the Budget, the general election, or the next five years. Nor is there a long-term crisis in health spending. Contrary to expectations, the health service has not been seriously squeezed during 17 years of Conservative government. Today we spend a higher proportion of our national income on health than we did in 1979.

And there is no good reason why health's share of the national cake should be rising any faster. We are a healthy nation. If, as we get richer, we want to spend more as individuals on our health then we should put the money into healthy food and exercise – a far more cost-effective way of improving health than shortening waiting lists.

This year a specific problem has emerged. The health budget hardly increased compared to the increases in previous years. Yet demands on hospitals continue to rise, with the growing elderly population and an unexplained increase in accident and emergency attendance. No wonder then that the hospitals are in trouble. The Government would be wrong to use tax cuts as a reason to avoid bailing them out. But £300m isn't going to bust the bank. It makes up less than one per cent of spending on the NHS, and is nothing in comparison with the billions needed for significant tax cuts.

If Kenneth Clarke is planning a substantial Budget giveaway – cutting the basic rate to 20p for example – then the hospital trust shortfall will be small change in comparison. If he can find that kind of cut in spending somewhere else (or that level of figure fiddling) then there seems little reason why he shouldn't fit in another pre-

election health spending bribe as well.

The more serious risk is that the Government will be so determined to produce substantial tax cuts that it will deny resources to other areas that badly need it. Education, rather than health care, is the area that really requires more investment over the next decade, whether we pay for it publicly or privately. Improving the quality of schooling, giving children with difficulties the attention they need, delivering books and computers to the classroom, and recruiting and motivating top quality teachers



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pay bill is one popular tactic; so is slashing capital spending. But those games cannot be played for long.

It would be dishonest for the Government to promise huge tax cuts when the nation cannot really afford it. If Kenneth Clarke announces in his Budget next month that the basic rate is going to be cut to 20p, then the next government, whatever its political hue, will have to find a way of raising taxes again or cutting spending to make ends meet – just as it did after the 1992 election. There seem to be hints around in the political back-alleys which suggest the Tories may be about to pull the same deception they pulled on voters in 1992: portraying themselves as the party of tax cuts in contrast to Labour tax rises, when in fact they know that the cuts must be paid for by someone, somehow, somewhere.

Labour – in its determination to make sure the Conservatives can't repeat the trick – risks its own dishonesty. Eager not to be portrayed as the high-spend, high-tax party, it risks endorsing the idea that tax cuts are painless. Reducing tax for the poorly paid is an admirable aim, not least because it could encourage employment. But in the short term tax cuts at the bottom end will need to be paid for by tax increases at the top, or by identified cuts in public spending.

As our nation gets richer, and our economy grows, there is more money for governments to play with. But there are new demands, too. Taxing and spending decisions, especially in the short term, are trade-offs. Voters are often wiser than politicians think: they will not forget that they were treated, then tricked, last time around.

Travels with my prejudices

British tourists are ranging further, Bafield, says the Association of British Travel Agents. "Exotic" destinations (like Mexico? exotic?) are in. It would be gratifying if this signalled a revival in the spirit of adventure and exploration. In fact it is about simple pricing: skiing in North America has become a lot cheaper than Switzerland; the Caribbean now competes with Cyprus.

Will greater distance broaden the nation's horizons? Not likely. It's hard to argue that package travel broadens the mind. After all, we haven't become conspicuously more European through taking holidays in France and Spain. People returned from the Med with their skin browned, their hair paler, and their prejudices very firmly intact.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The best way to handle a wife-beater

Sir: The selection of Paul Gascoigne for the England team and the controversy it has aroused crystallises some of the most pressing questions facing our society ("England's women expect a wife-beater to stay in decent obscurity", 2 November).

Glen Hoddle's decision to give Gazza another chance – a chance to establish a good character in conjunction with his accepting counselling to help him overcome his problems – is a most refreshing and much-needed injection of compassion and understanding into public life. And it is still one that refuses to condone the player's violent behaviour off the field.

Hoddle has made a point of saying that he hopes his inclusion of Gazza will help the man overcome his problems. As such, his attitude contrasts sharply with the many who can see no further than making outraged condemnations.

Some of Glen Hoddle's critics have warned of the danger of Gazza's becoming a role model and thus reinforcing the behaviour of men who beat women. Perhaps, though, he might become a role model for those whose behaviour is unacceptable, simple excluding these children from school will not bring them the understanding and expert help they undoubtedly need.

Hoddle's emphasis on inclusion also makes a telling juxtaposition with the word "exclusion", which we have heard used so frequently in relation to unruly pupils. While their behaviour is absolutely unacceptable, simple excluding these children from school will not bring them the understanding and expert help they undoubtedly need.

TERESA DELTON
Nottingham

Sir: Who says athletes or any other public figures are, or should be, role models? Youths may want to play like Gazza, but how many really want to be like him in every respect?

Talk of role models encourages the adoration of heroes, which is dangerous, as Jesse Jackson frequently points out to black ghetto children in America, where sports, especially, are seen as a way to escape poverty. Only a pitiful handful succeed.

A loving parent, a dedicated teacher or an interested neighbour are better role models than all the heroes and heroines who ever lived.

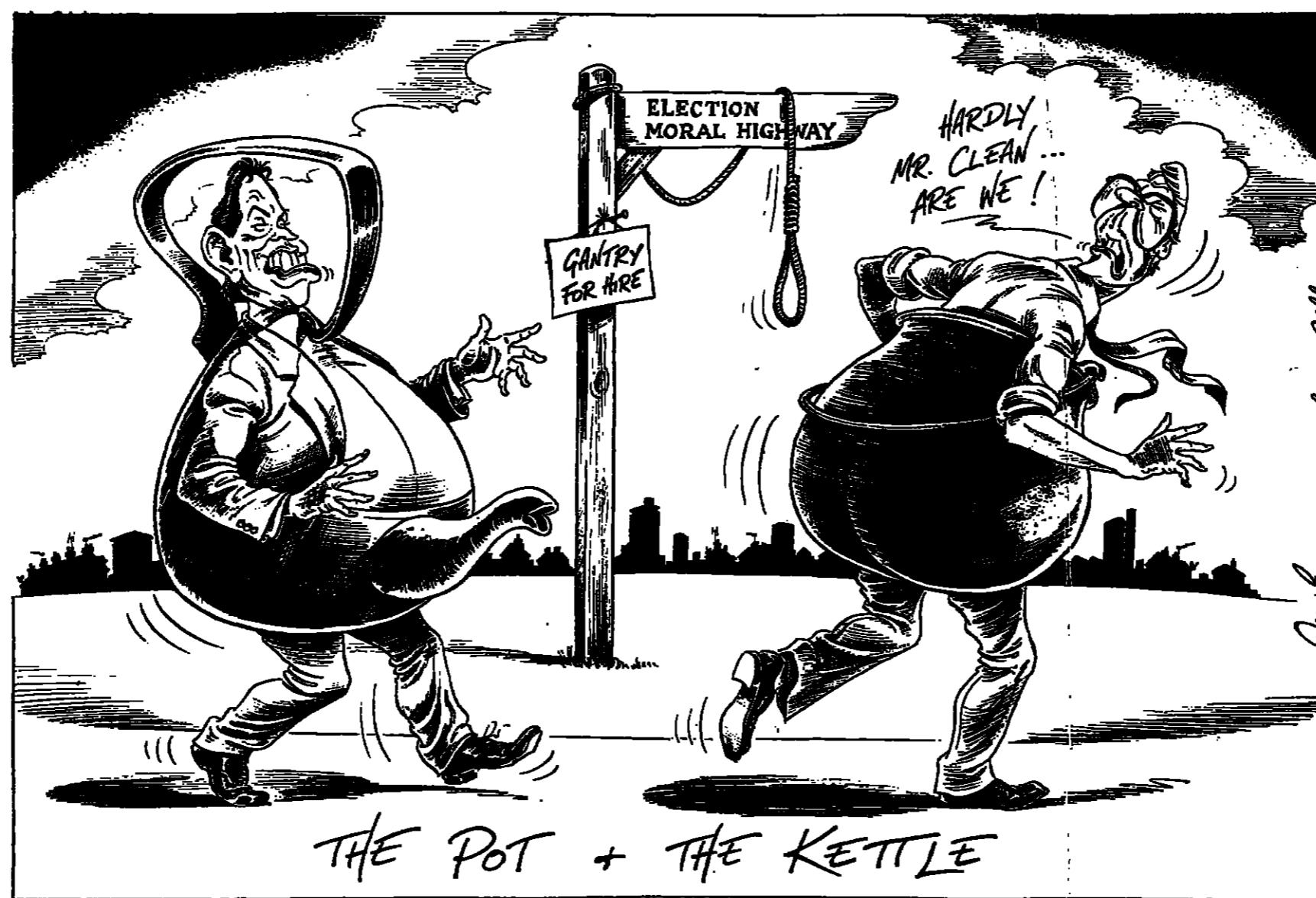
RONALD OGDENS
Culcheth, North Yorkshire

Sir: Soccer is something I don't understand, but will it be worth protesting should there be any future printing of books by HG Wells, not to mention the staging of plays by Dylan Thomas, as it is alleged they too were horrid to their wives? Perhaps we should also stay away from any further productions of Shakespeare's Henry VIII.

ROBERT VINCENT
Andover, Hampshire

Media studies maligned

Sir: The condemnation of media studies courses as a whole in Lucy Hedges' article ("The trendy travesty", 31 October) is reminiscent of the condemnation of the rise of English and Modern History by Oxford classicists of a hundred years ago – fashionable, a passing phase, a poor training of



the mind, etc. It is another manifestation of what amounts to a campaign in the media against the study of their own institutions and products and against the acquisition of skills that seemingly are unworthy of being taught and in little demand.

This knee-jerk reaction to rapidly growing subject areas in higher education involves assumptions about trendiness and soft options without really asking questions about why subjects grow.

Such growth can have nothing, apparently, to do with the development of new and challenging ideas which seem highly relevant to modern post-industrial societies, and nothing to do with the expansion of media-related job opportunities in those societies.

Universities are accused of "cashing in" on the trend, and there seems no recognition of the alternative view that they are responding to demand from applicants.

None of the field can be complacent about the failure of some graduates to get jobs, and media studies has no doubt its dottier fringe and some less than excellent courses, but Ms Hedges seems to think it would be better if unemployed media graduates had joined the very much larger numbers of unemployed graduates of engineering, sociology and business studies.

DAVID FADDY
Head of School of Communication
University of Westminster
Harrow, Middlesex

Sir: How disappointing that *The Independent* should jump on the bandwagon of attacking "trendy" university degrees such as Media Studies, especially when American Schools of Journalism have been

pouring out eminent journalists for decades. Will we never learn?

You have failed to realise the changing nature of media courses over the last 10 years. Here at Huddersfield, as in many universities our media teaching is predominantly practical, aimed at equipping students with multi-skills for the new bi-media era and with a high investment in technology.

STEPHEN KELLY
Teaching Fellow in Media
University of Huddersfield

Sir: Six unsupported generalisations in two sentences (leading article, 31 October). Not to worry, *Independent*; such sloppy writing will keep you safe from a general degree course.

DR MAIRE M DAYES
Director of Studies, B.I. Media & Cultural Studies
London College of Printing
London EC1

Windfall unity
Sir: Your Business Comment (1 November) announces "Blair and Brown fall out over windfall gains". In fact Blair, Brown and the whole Labour Party are united in their commitment to a one-off windfall levy on the excess profits of the privatised monopoly utilities which will pay, over the course of a Parliament, for our carefully costed new deal for young people and the long-term unemployed.

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL
Press Secretary, Tony Blair
London SW1

British fog over Ireland's past

Sir: Ronan Bennett's article on the film *Michael Collins* states that "audiences in the US are sadly unable to follow the British lead of dispassionate inquiry and analysis when it comes to Ireland".

After years of debate with Irish, British and other European nationals, it is my view that in general the British are anything but capable of dispassionate inquiry and analysis when it comes to Ireland.

Unfortunately, the traditional teaching of history in the UK has left us with a poor sense of our general involvement in the affairs of other countries as a colonial power. Were the British generally more capable of dispassionate inquiry and analysis, one could only hope that the situation in Northern Ireland could have been resolved sooner.

MICHAEL D SMITH
London SE13

The day I hit a schoolboy
Sir: We have lost our sense of proportion on smacking children ("Carey happy to give a gentle smack", 26 October, letter 28 October). I taught chemistry in a Cambridge boys' school during the war, and I had to teach 30 boys in a lab designed for 20.

During one practical class a boy deliberately put a piece of sodium on to a wire spoon and held it

under the water tap. There was, of course, an explosion. I walked up to the culprit and slapped him on the cheek. I had no further trouble with that difficult class. I am still convinced that I did the right thing.

BARBARA DAINTON
(Lady Dainton)
Oxford

Sir: Do Glad Shaw thinks that respect for teachers is earned merely by the wearing of a smart "uniform" (report, 4 November). Gillian Shephard wants schools to indoctrinate children to an authoritarian "moral" agenda. Why don't we solve the problems of education by sending all our children to a Chinese prison?

TOM HARDY
Tolworth Girls' School
Surbiton, Surrey

Divinely wrong
Sir: It is hardly surprising that John Major's election in 1992 was considered unimportant by the American news media (letter, 1 November). Many, probably most, Americans believe the Queen governs Britain.

Only last year a columnist in the *Washington Post* told that paper's readers that government in Britain is based on "the divine right of kings" and offered a quotation from James I in 1607 to prove it.

GEOFFREY PERRET
Beverley, Humberside

Give us health figures straight

Sir: Jack O'Sullivan ("Is the NHS safe under Mr Blair's team?", 30 October) is right to suggest that Labour is as short as ever on fresh ideas. But journalists and other commentators repeatedly let the politicians off hooks.

Firstly, they conspire in using a monetary language which the politicians are only too happy to use to confuse the public: continual reference to the percentage of GDP spent on the NHS.

It is clearer and more relevant to ask whether total health care expenditure per person per year in the UK (1993 figures from OECD health data) at £7.28 is about right, too much or too little compared with Germany (£1.447), France (£1.335), Canada (£1.218), Portugal (£395) and Greece (£252).

However, that is not the only hook. Your journalists and correspondents (Stephen Pollard, letter, 1 November) too readily let the politicians off with phrases such as "... to increase funding of the NHS ... will simply not be possible beyond what John Major has already pledged since it will require tax increases". That neatly constrains and curtails the argument.

Let us open the debate in relation to how the tax cake is divided up. Should there be a bigger slice to the NHS and less to defence? That is the debate we should be having – and it would be less confusing if your commentators used language understood by all of us.

Dr G DE LACEY
Consultant Radiologist, Northwick Park Hospital
Harrow, Middlesex

Sanctions needed against Nigeria

Sir: The anniversary of the executions of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni minority rights activists at Nigeria's notorious Port Harcourt prison falls on 10 November. The murders authorised by an illegal military regime caused outrage worldwide. The Commonwealth suspended Nigeria's membership and threatened further sanctions if improvements were not made on human rights. Other countries withdrew diplomatic representation. At long last the world at large was seeing General Abacha and his henchmen for what they are.

Twelve months on nothing has changed for the largest black nation on earth. Over a hundred million people are still enslaved by a brutal and corrupt cabal and its greed for the nation's vast oil wealth. The prisons hold thousands of political prisoners, most notably president elect Moshood Abiola, whose only crime was to win the 1993 presidential election, kept in solitary confinement without trial for almost two and a half years.

The Foreign and Commonwealth office believes that "progress is being made". They should listen to prominent Nigerians like Wole Soyinka and Chief Raf Uwechue, who call for an oil embargo, banning of further arms sales and, importantly as Nigeria's military masters have salted away many millions in oil revenues, the freezing of assets held in Swiss and Lebanese bank accounts. It is only measures such as these that will bring an end to this evil regime.

TOM ROBBINS
Norton Canes, Staffordshire

Good old Richard

Sir: Why should the statue of Richard I, a valiant Crusader King who personified the hopes of medieval Christianity by fighting to reclaim the Holy Land, be removed from Westminster (letter, 4 November)? What is incongruous is the statue of Oliver Cromwell, who forcibly dissolved four parliaments, on one occasion commanding a soldier to remove "that fool's bauble" the Speaker's mace. He established a dictatorial personal rule through a big standing army and a network of spies.

JENNIFER MILLER
London SW15

Rats to Hanover

Sir: Shame on my native town, Hamburg, for abandoning its Hanseatic spirit and the Beatles' muse ("Four decades on", 2 November). But lest your arts news editor, David Lister, be accused of libel by Hanover, it was the pompous corporation plus mayor of Hanover (Hanelin) who had to suffer the Pied Piper's just wrath – and not only according to Robert Browning.

INGEROSE SAYER-HEYD
Oxford

Lock-free zone

Sir: Further to your correspondence on the crimeless 1950s, the Golden Age extended well into the 1960s. As a student at Exeter University in 1968, I remember the opening of a new women's hall of residence which had no locks on any of its 80 bedrooms.

STEPHEN MAGILL
Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

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(Fax: 0171-293 2036; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk)

E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

As Boris Yeltsin prepares for his heart operation, a small, unelected group wield power: his daughter Tatyana, a ruthless in-fighter rumoured to be her lover, and a clutch of heavyweight businessmen. By Phil Reeves



Russia's new regency

Russians don't much like women taking part in politics. They occasionally profess admiration for Margaret Thatcher or their own Catherine the Great, but most regard the idea of female rule as about as welcome as a ban on fur hats. Yet that, in part, is what they now have.

As Boris Yeltsin awaits his heart operation, due this week, power has flowed from his enfeebled grasp into the youthful hands of his younger daughter, Tatyana Dyachenko, working with his chief of staff, Anatoly Chubais, and a powerful coterie of businessmen. Less than four months after an election that many in the West hoped would prove that democracy had finally taken root in Russia, unelected members of Moscow's social élite have taken command.

The reaction has been negative. "They [the press] used to attack the president," grumbled Yeltsin's wife, Naina, in a weekend television interview. "Now it is Tatyana who is under fire." The family had stopped showing her husband the more distress-

ing newspaper articles, she said, for fear they would upset him.

But this does not appear to have daunted the Kremlin's new political double act. In the past four months, Chubais and his camp have secured the dismissal of their most formidable Kremlin opponents. They have ap-

pointed two leading business supporters to senior government jobs, consolidated control over two national television channels, and dictated access to the ailing president. Their enemies call them a regency, even their friends admit they rule the roost.

But the discovery that the country is under the sway of a highly unpopular Kremlin courtier, the president's daughter, and a clutch of heavyweights from big business has further deepened the public's cynicism. Russia is a male-orientated society, where the age of female liberation has yet to dawn. "No one would ever elect Tatyana," said one leading analyst, "it is just not in the nature of the country. And can you name any women in high office?" (There is, in fact, one: an obscure health minister.)

At present, Tatyana's role appears principally to be that of a link – a conduit of information and views between the president, his chief of staff Chubais, and the businessmen behind him. But her larger ambitions are the source of considerable speculation. Does

she aspire for power, high elected office, perhaps even eventually the presidency itself? Or is she simply helping to secure her father's position at a time when he is highly vulnerable to the scheming and plotting of those around him?

Some commentators have

begun to hint that she is playing a longer game, and offer tentative comparisons with Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto, or even Indira Gandhi. According to *Moskovskaya Pravda*, one of Moscow's top political consultancies has been working on her profile, purely experimentally, to see how palatable she would be as a candidate. "Who would have thought half a year ago that this lady now marching through the Kremlin corridors with a radio telephone in her hand would become a real political figure?" remarked the paper.

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yana-Chubais axis. He is also one of a group of political bruisers whom Chubais (helped by Tatyana) have winkled out of the Kremlin in the past four months, most of whom level the same allegation: General Alexander Lebed, the sacked security chief, has talked of their desire to "rule as a duet", and has alleged that Chubais used Tatyana Dyachenko to persuade Yeltsin to fire him.

General Alexander Korzhakov, former head of the presidential guard, has accused Chubais of running an "unconstitutional regency", drafting presidential decrees in his own office. Tatyana brings Yeltsin the paperwork. Documents are "all prepared in Chubais's headquarters". The dismissal and alienation of the ex-KGB officer – for years Yeltsin's inseparable friend, trusted adviser, and drinking companion – is one of the most dramatic examples of Dyachenko's influence over her father. It is doubtful that Chubais could have persuaded Yeltsin to sever such a deep bond on his own.

Behind the cut and thrust of politics lies another, more delicate question. Is it true, as wagging tongues in Moscow claim, that the relationship between Chubais, 41, and Tatyana Dyachenko is more than merely professional? Reports of a liaison have been circulating for weeks in Moscow, a city which relishes scandal almost as much as Washington DC. Evidence, however, is in short supply.

In fact, sources say that the president's daughter's closest political associate is Igor Malashenko, president of Russia's commercially run NTV, another member of the campaign team. After the election, Malashenko was offered Chubais's job by Yeltsin, but turned it down. His company has been well rewarded for supporting the Kremlin during and after the elections; it has been allowed more space on the airwaves, is launching a new satellite service, and may even be allowed to buy up the ORT television channel.

But her future political plans overshadow lesser issues. At the moment, she and the Chubais camp hold the cards. They control a huge slice of the national television market – ORT and NTV – and a stack of newspapers. Attention has fixed on them, and not Russia's prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, the man to whom power passes, according to the constitution, if Yeltsin is incapacitated. But he has presidential ambitions and plenty of allies in the oil and gas lobby. A rivalry is in the making.

Tatyana Dyachenko must know that the odds in this macho-minded country of a woman – not to mention another Yeltsin – being elected are about as long as they are for a snow-free winter. But she will also remember how Yeltsin has fought back from exile from the Politburo, the scandalous bombardment of the White House, the ludicrous Chechen war, and deep overall unpopularity. Crazy though it seems, she may be interested in something more than her father's place in history.

Yeltsin's gatekeeper

No one in Russian politics produces such extreme reactions as Anatoly Chubais, the gatekeeper and right-hand man to Boris Yeltsin. The circle of millionaire bankers and businessmen that support him see him as a brilliant economic and political talent, whose presence in the Kremlin will ensure the future of Russia's free-market reforms and the safety of their fortunes. But for many millions of other Russians, he is a charming lackey of the West who devised a privatisation process in which Russia sold off some of its most treasured assets. Both sides would, however, agree on one front: the 41-year-old presidential chief of staff has the essential quality to survive in the Kremlin shark pool: ruthlessness. In the past four months, he has routed his most important rivals for power. Even before his appointment in July, he secured the dismissal of his main rival for the post of the president, Yeltsin's former bodyguard, General Alexander Korzhakov. He was also behind the sacking of General Alexander Lebed.

Ten months ago, Chubais's career seemed to be in sharp decline after Yeltsin sacked him as his privatisation minister as a tool to an anti-reform, anti-Western mood in the country. He has worked his way back to the top with astonishing speed, masterminding Yeltsin's slick election campaign, and winning the post of chief of staff. Since then he has carefully shored up his own power base, sidelining the prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin. Through his association with Tatyana Dyachenko, Yeltsin's daughter, Chubais is now the only official with direct access to the president. He controls the Kremlin media operation, decides who sees the president, drafts laws and wields strong influence over at least two national TV channels.

They got it, by recruiting his family favourite, Tatyana.

As a member of the campaign's 10-strong analytical team, she acquired a reputation as a quietly efficient operator, with a shrewd sense of politics and presentation. She was

acutely conscious of her father's image, rushing in to groom his sweep of silver hair before television appearances, and banning his guards from wearing sunglasses because it made them even more thuggish than usual. When there was bad news for

Yeltsin, she would back him all the way, and even attend the first night if she had to.

So where does that leave the peace process?

"Peace process?" says a very harassed Home Office official. "There is no peace process. There is just a series of last-minute, behind-the-scenes, under-the-table, behind-closed-doors, in-the-nick-of-time desperate talks."

Between whom?

"We don't even know that. That's how secret they are."

Then how do you know they are actually going on?

"We don't," confesses a harassed Home Office official. "I am just saying that to make it seem that something is happening. The truth is that we have no idea what is happening. We shall probably just leave them to get on with it as usual."

There will be death and destruction on a grand scale and there is nothing we can do about it."

And that is why you look so harassed?

"No. That is because I work for Michael Howard."

How do we stop these flaming terrorists?



Miles Kington

history of the movement, and they insist on celebrating it. As a result we get a well-orchestrated mass outbreak of explosions and bombs all over Britain. It makes the Apprentice Boys' March look like Blind Man's Buff."

But what is it all for? What is this movement that celebrates such holy days?

"I wish we knew," says the harassed Home Office official. "They never come out and make any demands. They never insist on any reparation. They seem to have no organised head of operations. These

demonstrations of violence seem totally unrelated, yet they happen with frightening punctuality and regularity. As you probably know, an organisation with no chain of command is a lot harder to penetrate than any other kind. These people make the IRA look like the Boy Scouts."

Where are they based?

"I only wish we knew," says what I can only describe as a harassed-looking Home Office official. "They can

cause violence and burning anywhere in the British Isles at will. Our fire brigades are stretched to the limit on November. When the IRA pull off a job, it immobilises that part of town and it monopolises the emergency services in one area. But this Guy Fawkes mob can immobilise the whole bloody country!"

Guy Fawkes? Ah, so you have a name, at least? A lead of some kind?

"That's where they're so bloody clever!" says the Home Office official, swearing for the second time in as many sentences, which is a sure sign of being harassed.

"Yes, we thought we had a lead when this name came up but we couldn't find him anywhere on the computer until somebody had the bright idea of looking in the Crimes Unsolved (Historical) file.

Then we found him. Catholic terrorist, executed 1605, attempted murder and arson. What use was that to us?"

Were there no leads at all?

"Well, we found a woman

saying she would back him all the way, and even attend the first night if she had to."

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Elmer Gantry vs the Brixton boy: the gloves are off



Donald Macintyre

Blair is still waiting for an apology after Major suggested on TV that the Labour leader took a free trip on Concorde

Personal tensions between party leaders are nothing new. Neil Kinnock's dislike of Margaret Thatcher was largely political. But it impeded rather than enhanced his ability to get the better of her. Over Westland he famously failed to land the killer punch.

Kinnock once explained privately that his proper and traditionalist South Wales background inhibited him from attacking a woman, and an older woman at that. But his dislike was probably the reason why, in the confidence debate after she fell in November 1990, he failed sufficiently to exploit the Tories' discomfort by taunting them with the charge that they had sacrificed a leader better than they deserved. Kinnock almost certainly thought at the time – as Blair interestingly, did not – that they had been right to get her.

Moreover, those who were close to John Smith insist that the especially close personal relationship which he was supposed to enjoy with John Major was a bit of a Tory myth. Smith did see Major privately on several occasions, for example on the unfolding Bosnia crisis. But, it is said, emerged more often bemused than enlightened. Certainly Smith was inclined to make sure that there was an aide listening on an extension when the two leaders spoke on the telephone – as, he assumed, Major was doing, too.

So, what of the Blair-Major relationship? Well, there has certainly been scratchiness over the one issue the two parties were supposed to join forces over: Dunblane. Major has told colleagues he was angry that, the Government having agreed to postpone publication of the Cullen report until after the two party conferences, Labour made such an issue of Dunblane at Blackpool. George Robertson, however, is adamant that the agreement applied only to publication of the report – as his letter to Michael Forsyth indicates. There were already resolutions down for the conference, which anyway made it impossible to avoid debating the issue.

But this wasn't all. It now turns out that there was a little retrospective friction – if not between the leaders themselves, then between their two camps – over a short interview Major gave to the BBC outside his hotel the night before he and Blair visited the stricken school in Dunblane. Officials travelling with Major were worried that, since Blair was staying in Dunblane, he might be all over the airwaves before the Prime Minister arrived. It was agreed that neither would go public until the following day. But Major's aides say he was "downstepped" by the famously dogged Kenny Macintyre, the BBC's Scottish political editor, and didn't feel he could refuse to speak when a microphone was thrust at him. Labour were falling over themselves yesterday to say that they now accept there was no bad faith, and that Major was not in any way responsible.

ble for, or Blair remotely troubled by, other details such as the relative size of the Government-provided wreaths given to each, or Blair's place in the motorcade.

So is it all really sweetness and light? Major irritated Labour by complaining to a TV executive that Blair broke faith over Dunblane. And Blair was annoyed last month by Major's suggestion on BBC TV's *Breakfast with Frost* that he had once been, as a backbencher, on a free Concorde trip to the US, courtesy of Ian Greer. As it happens, the all-party trip had been sanctioned by Margaret Thatcher. Blair's office thought that Major had disassociated himself from similar accusations being pressed by the backbencher David Shaw. They made it clear after the interview that Blair was expecting an apology. And there hasn't been one yet.

This sheds a welcome, if at times bewildering, light on the mechanics of relations between the men at the top. But what does it prove?

The clue to this, perhaps, is in the vigorous attempts yesterday to play down the idea of any serious personal difficulties in their relations. While Tony Blair was protesting that there were no problems in his relationship with Major, a senior Tory – for background, of course – was explaining vig-

ously that Major actually likes Blair.

The truth is more complicated. Blair respects Major's ability to win elections, his survivability, his resilience and personal toughness. But he believes, and will never stop saying when the occasion arises, that Major is a weak leader. Major's "Elmer Gantry" crack – to a Tory MP – is wide of the mark, since the first and brimstone film evangelist was a lecher and a drunk. But Major does get irritated by what he sometimes sees as Blair's "holier than thou" approach to the moral agenda. Major knows that Blair is a formidable political force. But he may be a little chippy that Blair went to a private school – the same one, ironically, that spawned his own hero, Iain Macleod. And maybe some of this will help him recover an edge in the election.

But he must also surely know that he can't let it all get out of hand. The voters do care about personalities as well as issues. But there is a clear distinction between Blair attacking Major for weak leadership – or, for that matter, Major attacking Blair for being authoritarian – and petty aspersions on the character of your opponent.

Tonight, unless the US sees the biggest upset since Truman beat Dewey, a man routinely accused of serial adultery and taking dodgy foreign party donations will wipe the floor with a war hero with a generation of Senate experience behind him. It's a sobering thought. In the incestuous village that is Westminster, Major and Blair might as well get on best. They really believe that Hallowe'en has anything to do with it.

They will be cautious about long-term expansion plans. The economy's long-term capacity for producing goods and employing labour will grow only slowly. It will fail to keep up with the growth of the labour supply caused by productivity gains and increased participation of women in the workforce. The gap between labour supply and demand will grow. New technology and globalisation of trade will cause the effects to fall hardest on those who are least well qualified. There will be an increasing problem of an underclass.

This malign process has been going on in

A folk festival to lighten our darkness

by Andrew Brown



Between Hallowe'en and Guy Fawkes' night we have fireworks week: a spontaneous outburst of religious enthusiasm without any dogma

with raising spirits are some evangelical Christians, and even they are diminishing their protests as it becomes more about fireworks and less about pumpkins. Hallowe'en has come to mean the start of the firework season, and Guy Fawkes' night, the end of it. In between lies a passage of celebration and danger which is curiously detached from its moorings.

The danger is important. It

seems heartless to say so after

a weekend when fireworks have left eight children fatherless, but without the danger, fireworks would be less satisfyingly dramatic. If the bangs and flashes were not enough to frighten humans, how could they hope to drive away the darkness? Besides, the firework week of our modern autumn descends from much more barbarous and dangerous practices.

The association of this autumn festival with pain and

suffering is much deeper than might at first appear. There is a tradition of young men leaping through bonfires at seasonal festivals. This can never have been entirely safe, yet according to Fraser's *Golden Bough* it was a weakened form of the original rite, which would have involved human sacrifice. We do know that the Druids burned human beings, along with other animals, alive in wicker cages. Since then, Chris-

tians, too, have been valued for their combustible qualities, first by the Romans, and in the 16th century, by other Christians as well. It is horrible to reflect that the burning of heretics was a form of popular entertainment as well as a religious purging.

Modern celebrations are

much purer. Dr Martyn Percy,

the chaplain of Christ's Col-

lege, Cambridge, who has

made a special study of char-

ismatic religion, says that fire-

works are a powerful religi-

ous symbol: "We may be seeing

the emergence of a genuine folk-

religious festival, in which we

frighten off the darkness. In

Chinese religion you light fire-

works to scare the evil spirits

from the sky. That is why the

bangs have to be so noisy."

And fireworks can be used as

an illustration of all sorts of

Christian ideas, he says. They

can illustrate the idea of the

Ascension perfectly. They go

up into heaven: light spreads

over the world; and the original

substance disappears."

The link between physical

light and spiritual enlighten-

ment seems inescapable.

Aldous Huxley, in *The Doors of Perception*, argued that the use

of stained glass in cathedrals

arose from the need to fill the

darkness with coloured lights,

because these would tend to

transport the soul into a deeper

reality. He was, admittedly,

writing in praise of the religious

use of mescaline. But he drew

on a wealth of erudition to

argue that there were visions of

heaven as a city of many jewels

among mystics in all the liter-

ate religions of the world; and

if his argument explains the use

of stained glass in cathedrals, it

could also explain the uplifting

effect of fireworks on the spirit.

Dr Percy says the firework

festivals can be seen as part of

a wider trend towards celebra-

tion in all religions. In char-

ismatic Christianity, he says, it is

now common to be invited to

"celebrations" that have no

liturgical anchor. They are not

celebrations of any particular

saint or day, but simply of the

goodness of being alive.

From the standpoint of tra-

ditional religion this can look

strange and worrying, but in fact

we should celebrate this trend

towards pure celebration. Of

course it is frightening. In the

darkness beneath the bright

explosions there is anarchy

about. The adults are drunk.

The children are scared. The

bad spirits to be frightened are

still real. But at least they are no

longer political: we have

ascended from *auto-da-fé* to a

pure *jeu de joie*.

Education? It's the economy, stupid

Labour's solution to the underclass is misguided, says Robin Marris. Money management is the key

Last week the Chancellor raised interest rates. Only by token amount, but enough to pass a "message" to the City. Commentators have given diverse explanations for his action. None has given concrete evidence that actual inflation is accelerating dangerously. Gordon Brown, in his contribution to the debate in the Queen's Speech, implied that he did believe there was now a serious danger of inflation, but that this was the fault of the Government for failing to encourage investment.

My explanation is that both the Chancellor and his Shadow are still under the spell of a restrictionist macro-economic philosophy which effectively discourages investment. One can daily see the results throughout the media. Isn't it odd how City columnists so often report good news/bad news? In July last, *The Times* reported, "Output rise may still rate cut"; in the same month, *The Independent* wrote, "US jobs surge causes Wall Street pandemonium". Only a few weeks ago, again in *The Independent*, we read, "Clarke boozes bad for the stock market".

Think about it. Something that is good for the unemployed and for the economy causes stock market prices to fall and the Bank Governor to clamour for higher interest rates. Either there is something odd about the system, or market operators have an upside-down view of reality. I think it is the latter. Market operators, and the people who write for them, are suffering from irrational expectations. Journalists believe markets think that governments have come to believe that almost any improvement in the real economy is a danger sign for inflation. It is a vicious circle. Whether governments believe the gloomy scenario or not, they are forced, by fear of the markets, to behave as they did.

There are many arguments about the cause of this situation. After five years of 3 per cent inflation, we had the late-Eighties outbreak, when, though general OECD inflation never rose above 5 per cent, UK inflation stood at 7 per cent for a short time. The painful part of that experience was the violent decline in employment and production when the "bust" came. That was not a normal reaction; it was because the financial system had become unstable due to deregulation and the loans bonanza. So we got all the horrors of unemployment and negative equity.

Some of the instability is still there, and there is reason to be cautious, though exaggerated caution carries heavy costs. If the productive business sector comes to believe that every time they produce more goods they will be clobbered, then

they will be cautious about long-term expansion plans. The economy's long-term capacity for producing goods and employing labour will grow only slowly. It will fail to keep up with the growth of the labour supply caused by productivity gains and increased participation of women in the workforce. The gap between labour supply and demand will grow. New technology and globalisation of trade will cause the effects to fall hardest on those who are least well qualified. There will be an increasing problem of an underclass.

This malign process has been going on in

gerated, but 30 per cent is not far out.) Yet Tony Blair and Gordon Brown said nothing of the relationship between economic growth and job creation. In their comments on the macro-economy, both spoke mainly about inflation.

Instead, they said the solution to the underclass problem is "education, education and more education". But over the period in which the problem has emerged, we have seen a massive increase in the educational level of the working population. To take a single indicator, the proportion of women with no qualifications has

indeed difficult for governments to increase the sustainable rate of long-term economic growth. The second is fear of "the markets".

If these and similar fears are so real that nothing can be done, I am pessimistic for the underclass. Without macro-economic success, "supply-side" policies, such as more and better education, however intrinsically desirable, will fail to resolve the problem of jobs and low wages.

If that conclusion were true, it would be a poor reflection on the state of the world economy. Fortunately for my own state of mind, I do not myself believe it, because the long-run growth rate of total demand and capacity that the economy is able to sustain without unacceptable inflation (the so-called "sustainable" growth rate) is *flexible*. It is susceptible to both supply- and demand-side policy influences.

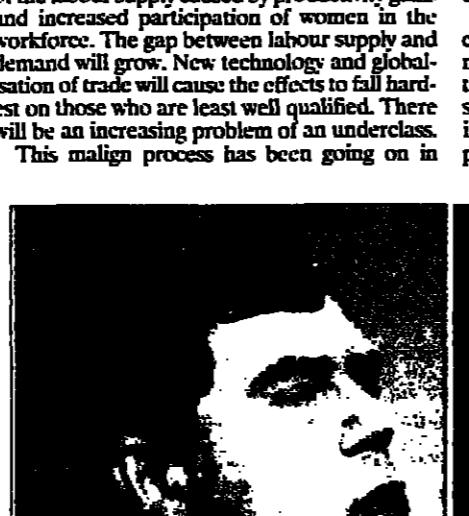
One policy that is required is a sustained effort by all governments to create a permanent reduction in long-term real interest rates (they are still, by historical standards, much too high). Another is simply a matter of business psychology. The business people who produce goods and services need constant reassurance that the basic aim of government policy is real long-term economic growth – not only of productivity per worker, but of total output and total employment.

The real economy needs to be constantly reassured that low inflation is a means to an end, not an end in itself. What Kenneth Clarke did last week gave all the wrong signals, and violated every one of these precepts.

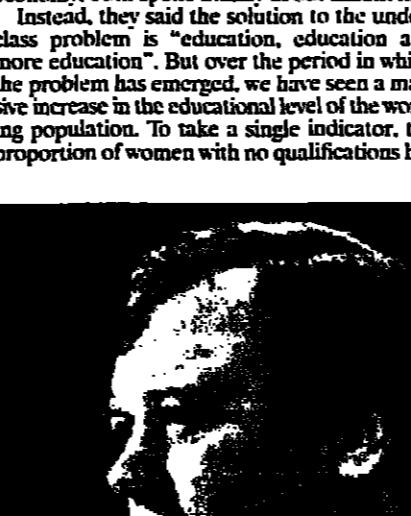
Gordon Brown has shown more awareness of the problem, but his spoken contribution is still bedevilled by the City syndrome. He did not address the problem that high interest rates are themselves a hindrance to investment, and therefore also a barrier to growth. I agree this is a chicken-and-egg problem, but at least it must be recognised.

John Redwood MP interrupted the parliamentary discussion of these difficult matters to ask how the Labour Party could expect to be heard on economic questions when it could not handle a 10-year-old child in Nottinghamshire. Unless the national economic debate is raised to a higher level than that, we shall see more and more of the underclass, and, not improbably, yet more rioting children.

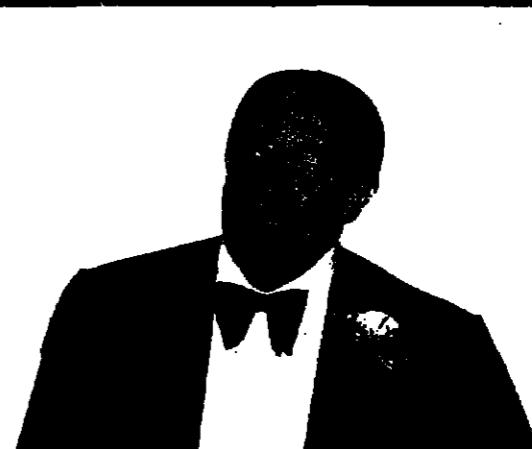
Robin Marris is Emeritus Professor of Economics at Birkbeck College, London University. His book *How to Save the Underclass* is published by Macmillan (£40 hardback, £12.99 paperback).



Are they too afraid of offending the City? Gordon Brown (left) and Kenneth Clarke



ON THIS DAY 1991



obituaries / gazette

Jean-Bedel Bokassa

When Jean-Bedel Bokassa met Idi Amin for the first time, he wore his decorations. The jacket of his Field Marshal's uniform, especially lengthened and strengthened for the purpose, glittered from neck to knee with every medal he had ever received and every order he had ever dreamt up to present himself. Since he was a short, stout man, and the jacket tapered outwards, the effect was of a Christmas tree without its fairy. Amin, who had turned up in battle-dress, was furious to find himself so upstaged and, it was said, immediately set his jewellers to work on a comparable display for himself.

That is a story of the vanity of tyrants. Modern Africa has known dictators more cruel and corrupt than Jean-Bedel Bokassa – Amin was one. Mobutu of Zaire is another – but it has never seen one more vain. He liked nothing more than the limelight and would do almost anything to turn its glow upon himself.

It is as well in a sense that the country he ruled for 13 years is one of the poorest in the world, so that the lack of means set limits to his excesses. His most glorious moments of *folie de grande*, however, elevated him firmly on to the world stage.

The Napoleonic coronation in 1977, at which he became Emperor Bokassa I of Central Africa, on its own would have assured him a place in history. Horses, carriages, jewelled crowns and fur-lined robes, champagne and caviar, thrones and court musicians all were imported from Europe. Surely no public occasion in the 20th century has been more lurid or insane.

But it was not only by extravagance that he courted attention; his friendship with the presidents of France was just as effective. A former soldier in the French army, he is said to have called de Gaulle "Papa". Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, an occasional guest at his game reserve, returned the compliment by referring to Bokassa as his cousin. It was Giscard who ordered the coup in 1979 which ended Bokassa's reign and, by an elegant twist, scandal over a gift of diamonds from Bokassa contributed to Giscard's election defeat two years later.

In a dull moment, Bokassa would declare to a foreign reporter his intention of acquiring the atomic bomb, or he would fly to Libya and, to please Gaddafi, convert to Islam. His unhappy years were those of his exile in France in the early 1980s, when he was reduced to seeking press attention by claiming to be broke and greeting callers at his château by candlelight.

A hatred of obscurity may have been what drove him back, in 1986, to face trial in Bangui, his former capital, where he had already been condemned to death in his absence. For a few days it worked, and the merry old showman again had an audience for his act, but the trial lasted months and the old man's spirit was eventually broken by the unrelenting recital of his acts of tyranny.

For he had been a tyrant, murdering and torturing while the world laughed at him. His life was a tragic one, although not for him personally – he largely escaped the consequences of his actions, dying a



Pure pantomime, lurid and insane: Bokassa in 1977 on his coronation as Emperor

airport for which his own son-in-law was summarily executed. Months later his son Georges was accused of plotting and fled to France.

Then in December 1976 Bokassa announced that the country was to be an empire, he was to be emperor and his favourite son (by his favourite wife) was his heir. The affair was a pantomime, boycotted by foreign governments but generously attended by the world's press. Quite how much was spent on it, on banquets, Belgian steeds and triumphal arches, will never be known, but it was now clear that the man was mad.

His legend grew: it was reported, for example, that he kept a harem of mistresses at his palace, and that he threw couriers who displeased him to the lions and crocodiles in his private zoo. Whatever the truth, beneath the brash surface his rule was crumbling. The French were becoming squeamish about supporting him, he had ruined the diamond business (the principal source of hard currency) and he could not pay his civil servants. His soldiers, also unpaid, were touring the wildlife reserves with AK-47s in hand, slaughtering the elephants for their ivory.

Fittingly, it was personal greed which provoked the denouement. On 18 January, street protests began in Bangui when he decreed that all schoolchildren and all students at Jean-Bedel Bokassa University must wear uniforms – only one supplier of uniforms existed.

There were coup attempts, real as well as imagined. In February 1976 Bokassa narrowly escaped an attack at Bangui

and, it was owned by the Empress Catherine, Bokassa's wife.

Troops fired on the crowds and dozens, perhaps hundreds, were killed, but the unrest, mostly in the form of school strikes, continued until April, when Bokassa, now in a state of fury, ordered a round-up of the troublemakers. Mostly boys aged between 12 and 16, they were hauled off to Ngangba Prison on the edge of Bangui. There followed a night of appalling violence in which Bokassa personally played a leading part. Children were beaten to death, tortured, stoned and suffocated in overcrowded cells. The final death toll was about 100, and a few of the victims were as young as eight years old.

The massacre was revealed by Amnesty International and the details were quickly confirmed by an international commission of inquiry which the French forced Bokassa to accept. Giscard d'Estaing ordered a coup and David Dacko, whom Bokassa had toppled 13 years earlier, returned to power.

The rest of Bokassa's life, spent in the Ivory Coast, France and finally in his native country, was devoted to the pursuit of publicity, which he used mainly in attempts to embarrass France.

In 1986 he surprised everyone by returning to Bangui, where he was tried for his crimes. Few fallen African dictators have been so fortunate in their treatment by the people they oppressed. The case was conducted in public and with

dignity, restraint and thoroughness, and a limited number of specific crimes – half a dozen specific murders in the years 1966-78 and the Ngangba massacre – were examined and proven.

(The most famous charge against Bokassa, that he was a cannibal, was dropped for lack of evidence. There are grounds for believing that the whole story of human meat kept in a freezer, which circulated first in the days after he was toppled, is a myth.)

Bokassa was condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to 20 years imprisonment and he was eventually released three years ago. The experience did not reform or humble him: his first act on being freed was to apply, in the name of Bokassa the First, to stand for president.

The truth about Bokassa, for all his antics, is not amusing but squalid. He was a military dictator of low intelligence but some cunning who took a poor country and over 13 years exploited its few assets relentlessly for his own grotesque advantage, ultimately leaving it in a state of anarchy and ruin.

Brian Cathcart

Jean-Bedel Bokassa, soldier and dictator: born Bobangui, French Equatorial Africa 22 February 1921; Army Chief of Staff, Central African Republic 1963-79; Prime Minister 1966-73; President 1967-79; President for Life 1972-79; proclaimed Emperor 1976, crowned 1977, deposed 1979; died Bangui, Central African Republic 3 November 1996.

Rohan Butler

Rohan Butler, Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, from 1938 to 1984 and Historical Adviser to the Foreign Secretary from 1963 to 1982, made one of the distinguished British tradition of commentators on the continental *ancien régime*. These two academic commitments co-existed happily with his more public role as Historical Adviser to the Secretary of State for Foreign (and later Foreign and Commonwealth) Affairs from 1963 to 1982, a post which had remained vacant since 1939 and which was re-occupied specifically for him. His enthusiasm for his duties here stemmed from a deeply rooted belief in the beneficial contribution which historians, particularly historians of early-modern Europe, could make to the formulation of contemporary foreign policy. Events since 1989 proved him to be right.

Rohan Butler's life changed dramatically in 1956 with his marriage to Lucy Byron. The sister of Robert Byron, the travel writer and one of the founders of the Georgian Group – a man by Butler's own admission had made a significant intellectual impression upon him long before his marriage – Lucy Butler helped to sharpen her husband's interest in cultural history, a theme which is strongly present in his work on Choiseul, a great 18th-century patron of painting, architecture and music.

As Lady of the Manor of White Notley in Essex, Lucy had her own set of commitments and priorities, which enabled Rohan Butler to devote time and energy to All Souls, of which he was sub-warden from 1961 to 1963, without the resentment which so many Fellows justifiably feel about the demands posed by the not always rational sets of collegial responsibilities and ceremonies.

Following a first class degree at Balliol College, Oxford, he was elected in 1938, to a fellowship at All Souls – as had been his father, one generation earlier – and All Souls remained one of the two centres of his life. The next year, 1939, he published his analysis of contemporary German history, *The Roots of National Socialism*, which attempted to place the Nazi movement within the broader structures of German culture.

During the Second World War Butler was on the staff of the Ministry of Information, transferring to the Foreign Office in 1944. His life would now remain a fugal exchange between public service and university scholarship. His commitment to the 18th century was uniminished, but following the war Butler, from his base at All Souls, participated, on the invitation of Sir Llewellyn Woodward, in the preparation of the *Documents of British Foreign Policy*, of which he was senior editor from 1955 to 1965. These volumes confirmed Butler's fundamental belief in the centrality for historical research of primary, archival documentation, the bedrock of his work.

His commanding position in 18th-century studies had been established in 1980 by the publication of *Choiseul*. The density and meticulous integrity of research, based upon a wide range of public and private archives,

underscored Butler's determination to view historical writing from, as he often said, "the inside", from the perspective of the deployers of power, their priorities and their biases, not from "the outside", where others misguidedly attempt to tidy history into overarching causal themes in a linear, determinist and, ultimately, moralising structure. This approach was shared by two of his close friends, Hugh Murray Baillie and Raghild Hatton, and the work of all three scholars has made a profound impact on late-20th-century historiography.

Already honoured by his nomination in 1966 as CMG and in 1981 by the award of an Oxford DLitt, Butler received the special distinction, exceptionally rare for a foreigner, as a Laureate of the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques in Paris, in recognition of the enormous achievement of *Choiseul*. His friends and admirers were surprised that other British academic acknowledgements eluded him. Recognition in France should not obscure the fact that this volume was really a study of European, not exclusively French, history, and its sequel, never finished, devoted to Choiseul's years as ambassador in Rome and Vienna would have expanded upon his cosmopolitan theme.

The last sentence, on page 1719 of *Choiseul: father and son*, 1719-1754, published in 1980, was much more than a study of the early years of Louis XV's Lorraine-born chief minister; it was a pioneering attempt to break loose from a Gallocentric view of continental history and to explore a cosmopolitan society for which the concept of the "nation-state" had very little meaning. The *Choiseul* volume was as much a portrait of overlapping European élites as it was the prelude to what should have been a multi-volume biography of one of the dominant figures of 18th-century political history.

Butler was uniquely suited to this demanding task. Born in London, he was raised in Geneva, where his father, Sir Harold Butler, a member of the Ormonde clan, was head of the International Labour Office. Although he was educated at Eton, the long periods of time spent with his family in Switzerland helped to produce a very wide and nuanced view of European political culture and to perfect his expert command of languages, spoken French and German, read Italian and Castilian.

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A man of abundant generosity to his friends, two articles included in *Festschriften* to other scholars will support his academic reputation: his contribution on "paradigmatics", a concept which he defined, in *Studies in Diplomatic History in Honour of G.P. Gooch OM*, and his startling revelation of the intricacies of personal diplomacy between monarchs in the 18th century which will be published early in 1997 in the memorial volume honouring Raghild Hatton, *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe*. A third article, on the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, in the *New Cambridge Modern History*, directs attention to the "breadth" of Butler's chronological canvas.

Rohan Butler was a towering figure, his imposing physical size and presence complementing his penetrating intellect and his exacting methodology. He combined many worlds in one life and one career and he will be deeply missed as both a formidable personality in the theatre of Oxford life and as a scholar who commanded the deepest respect in the world of international erudition.

Robert Oresko

Rohan D'Olier Butler, historian: born London 21 January 1917; Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford 1938-84 (Emeritus); Sub-Warden 1961-63; Historical Adviser to the Foreign Secretary 1963-82; CMG 1966; married 1956 Lucy Byron (three stepdaughters); died Chelmsford 30 October 1996.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

GRAHAM On 2 November 1996, peacefully, fully clothed, aged 73 years, formerly husband of the late June, and a dear friend to many, Graham. Funeral service at Woking Crematorium at 11.30am on Tuesday 12 November. Flowers or donations, if wished, to Cancer Research UK, 7th Floor, 11 St. Andrews Place, London NW1 4JU. Tel: 01933 334516.

LEWIS On 30 October 1996, suddenly, at home, Alan William Leyland, 70, formerly of Merrist, Somerset. Beloved husband of the late June, and a dear friend to many. Funeral service at Woking Crematorium at 11.30am on Tuesday 12 November. Flowers or donations, if wished, to Cancer Research UK, 7th Floor, 11 St. Andrews Place, London NW1 4JU. Tel: 01933 334516.

PETT On 4 November 1996, the Rev Dom Ian Pett, aged 73 years, monk of Ampleforth Abbey. Requiem Mass, Friday 8 November at 12 noon at Ampleforth Abbey.

THOMPSON On 4 November, suddenly, at home, William Tupper Thompson, 87, formerly of Luton, beloved husband of Harriet and father of Christopher, Virginia, Stephen, David, Simon, Giles and Matthew, and seven grandchildren. Funeral service at Castle Combe Church on Saturday 9 November at 1.30pm, followed by interment at Leigh Delamere, Forest of Dean. Donations to the Royal British Legion, RNLI, West Quay Road, Poole, BH15 1HZ.

For Gazette, please telephone 0171-293 2011.

Birthdays

Mr Richard Annand VC, 82; Sir John Bailey, former HM Procurator General, 68; Mr John Berger, author and art critic; Mr Edgar Bowring, former chairman, CTC Bowring & Co, 81; Major Sir Rupert Clarke, former chairman, National Australia Bank, 77; The Right Rev Francis Coates, former Bishop of Shrewsbury, 63; Mr Alan Garfunkel, singer and composer, 55; General Sir John Hackett, soldier, scholar and author, 86; Mrs Caroline Jackson, MEP, 50; Dr Paul Keayman, Westminster coroner, 52; Sir David Mawson, former President, Scottish Dental Council, 66; Mr Michael Mawson, mayor, 61; Mr John Morris QC, MP, 65; Mr Peter Nourse, rock musician and singer, 49; Miss Tatium O'Neal, actress, 32; Mr Lester Piggott, jockey, 61; Rear-Admiral Andrew Richardson, former Chief Executive, RSPCA, 65; Mr Roy Rogers, actor, 34; Miss Elle Sommers, actress, 56; Lord Stallard, former Labour MP, 75; Sir William Stubbs, chief executive, Further Education Funding Council, 59; Mr Eldred Tatchikoff QC, President, Board of Deputies of British Jews, 53; Mr Ned Temko, Editor, *Jewish Chronicle*, 44; Sir Anthony Tennant, chairman, Christie's International, 66.

Anniversaries

BIRTHS Léon-Philippe Tisserand de Bort, meteorologist and discoverer of the stratosphere, 1855; John Burdon Sanderson Haldane, physiologist and geneticist, 1892; Vivien Leigh (Vivien Hartley), actress, 1913; Deanna Pierre-Amoh, Francoise Choderlos de Laclos, soldier and writer, 1803; Maurice Utrillo, painter, 1883; Jacques Tati (Tat'stelle), actor and director, 1902; Samson Agudrews, television presenter, 1987.

Dinners

MHS *History* Annual Sir Michael Boyce, Second Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command, hosted a dinner held yesterday evening on board his flagship HMS *Victory*, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth. The Princess Royal and Captain T.J.H. Lewin were the principal guests.

Lectures

National Gallery Jacqueline Lewis, "Grand Tours (1): Aristocrats Abroad, Bataoni, *Portrait of a Gentleman*", 1pm.

Victoria and Albert Museum Cstl. Rimell, "Metal-laid Decoration on Furniture", 2.30pm.

Tate Gallery Jeremy Black, "Responses to Italy and France", 1pm.

British Museum Lorna Oakes, "Ancient Egyptian Thought in the Old Testament", 1.15pm.

National Portrait Gallery John Cooper, "Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury and the Gunpowder Plot", 1.10pm.

RIBA Architecture Centre, London Nels Toplis talks about his work.

London SW1 Professor Terence Kealey, "The Economic Laws of Scientific Research", 6.30pm.

Gresham College Bernard's Inn Hall, London EC1: Professor Peter Hennessy, "Prestige II: 'The Colonel and the Drawing Room', Anthony Eden 1953-57", 1pm.

RIBA Architecture Centre, London SW1 Professor Terence Kealey, "The Economic Laws of Scientific Research", 6.30pm.

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ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS The Prince of Wales attended a party to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Dillons of Greville Street, London WC1, at President, Animal Health Trust, Kennel Club, London NW1 and attended an International Meeting of Dogkeepers' Palace and Kennel Club, London NW1.

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business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098

BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Oftel to look at £13bn BT takeover

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Telecom's proposed £13bn takeover of MCI, the US long-distance telephone operator, was facing mounting regulatory hurdles last night as AT&T, its giant American rival, said it would lodge a formal objection with the UK telecommunications watchdog, Oftel. It also emerged that it will take up to a year to gain approval for the deal from competition authorities on both sides of the Atlantic.

One possible line of concern that could be investigated by Don Crickshank, the UK regulator, is the 13.5 per cent stake in Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation which Concert, the new global company, will inherit from MCI. Mr Crickshank has recently ordered BT to stop cross-promoting BSkyB satellite TV services in its advertising literature.

BT has already said it expects to take until autumn next year to get official approval. A

tomers.

Mentioning BT alongside the other leading European operators, he said: "If a country has a single, strong national telecommunications firm, it has a big problem."

"In the US we are very lucky that AT&T was broken up by court order in the early 1980s. Yet nowhere else around the globe do we see a repetition of our clearly successful experiment with demonopolisation."

Shares in BT soared yesterday as most City analysts gave the deal with MCI their seal of approval on the grounds that it boosted short-term value for shareholders.

BT shares ended the day 22p higher at 373p, having risen at one stage to 384p.

The highest rated UK team of telecoms analysts at BZW, the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank, changed their assessment of the stock to a "buy" recommendation while Hoare Govett, the stockbrokers, raised their fair value judgement of BT's share price from 350p to 400p.



Transatlantic team: The new Concert logo

spokeswoman for Oftel confirmed the UK side of the investigation had begun and said: "When we'll finish it we can't say. We don't know until we study the agreement what sort of issues we need to address. There are other authorities who will be involved, including the DTI."

AT&T had previously announced its intention to lobby Oftel's US counterpart, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Department of Justice on the grounds that BT still had a virtual monopoly of local telephone services.

US regulators have made clear they will only approve the deal if US firms can gain similar access to British phone markets as rival operators can achieve in the US. AT&T has 55 per cent of the US long-distance phone market, while since the group's break-up in the mid-1980s, it has had been excluded from the \$10bn local market.

However, during a visit to the UK in September, the chairman of the FCC expressed serious concerns about the openness of all European telecoms markets. In a speech to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, Reed Hundt warned that most European telephone markets remained closed to competition for residential cus-

Comment, page 19



Going through the roof: Analysts say that house price inflation in double digits is looking more likely as prices increase sharply

Zip in homes market 'signals rate rise'

Diane Coyle
Economics editor

Fresh signs of zip in the housing market point to the prospect of further rises in interest rates

economists said yesterday. The Bank of England's quarterly Inflation Report, out tomorrow

is expected to say that unless base rates increase again the Government is likely to miss its inflation target.

"It is very unlikely that just one touch on the tiller will be enough," said Paul Mortimer, chief economist at investment bank Paribas.

He added that the Bank was likely to shade down its inflation forecast compared with its August report, but it was very

clear that the economy was building up steam.

Official figures due today are expected to signal a bounce in manufacturing output in September. Meanwhile the evidence of buoyant consumer demand continues to pile up.

House prices rose by 1.6 per cent in October, the biggest monthly increase since February 1994, according to Halifax Building Society. That took them 7.1 per cent higher than a year earlier, the fastest year-on-year increase since 1989.

The average house price in October rose by 6.5 per cent in the year, and a jump of 0.8 per cent last month compared with September.

Separate figures yesterday showed that new housebuilding starts rose by 16 per cent in the three months to September.

The total of 47,100 starts was 13 per cent higher than in the same

three months a year earlier.

Treasury minister Angela

Knight said: "The building

bricks of recovery, which have

been since there in other

parts of the economy, are now

in housebuilding too. Bricks

are back in business."

Last month also saw an un-

expectedly large rise of 0.7 per

cent in M0, the narrow measure

of the money supply. Its year-

on-year growth increased to

7.5 per cent from 7.2 per cent

in September.

The amount of cash in cir-

culation in the economy, the main component of M0,

climbed by 100m during the

month. Although M0 is not a re-

liable month-to-month indica-

tor of retail sales, yesterday's

figures did confirm the gener-

al picture of robust consumer

spending.

The weekly sales figures from

John Lewis, the department

store group, added further

anecdotal evidence. The

amount of money passing

through its tills in the week to

26 October was the highest so

far this year, though the timing

of half-term meant the year-on-

year rate of growth dipped.

The London Chamber of

Commerce said that the econ-

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with growth expected to top 4.6

per cent this year. It predicted

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Leslau cashes in £5m Burford share options

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Nick Leslau, the 36 year old

chief executive of the Burford

and Trocadero property groups,

cashed in share options worth

more than £5m yesterday to pay

off personal tax and debts.

Following the deal he still retains

its full-year forecast for house

prices to 7 per cent and is

predicting a similar advance

next year. Other housing market experts think this is still much more cautious. James

Barty, an economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "The housing market is very buoyant. House prices inflation in double digits across the country is looking more and more likely."

Last week, Nationwide Building Society reported a 7.9 per cent rise in prices over the past year, and a jump of 0.8 per cent last month compared with September.

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COMMENT

A highly unstable and potentially unwieldy management structure is being created. No company ultimately needs or can live with two chairmen and two chief executives'

British Telecom is marrying on the rebound

It is easy to be sceptical about British Telecom's merger with MCI. Easy, but wrong. To begin with, let's look at why this might be a bad thing for BT and its shareholders.

For a start, it looks too much like a deal on the rebound to be taken seriously as the claimed marriage made in heaven. If MCI was the perfect partner all along, what were the talks with Cable & Wireless all about? Just a casual fling? It is hard to resist the impression that BT just wants to do a deal – any deal. This, in other words, is expansion for the sake of it, management egomaniac and all the other reasons why companies with big balance sheets and money to burn tend to go away.

Second, the price being paid is plainly a full one, even if the promised special dividend and share buyback go some way to enabling BT shareholders to participate in their company's show of largesse. The claimed eventual cost savings of £500m a year barely justify the premium being paid. Third, it is hard to see what benefits, other than cost savings, BT derives from 100 per cent ownership that it could not have got from its present 20 per cent holding in MCI. The existing level of investment might seem enough for all the international joint ventures and initiatives BT could possibly want.

Fourth, as with any international merger, a highly unstable and potentially unwieldy management structure is being created. No company ultimately needs or can live with

two chairmen and two chief executives, even when its two main businesses happen to be on either side of the Atlantic. The structure proposed by BT is a formula for possibly quite explosive friction.

Fifth, and possibly most important, BT is spending a small fortune expanding in what is fast becoming a commodity service in what is also the world's most competitive telecommunications market. Even the most basic of management textbooks tells you this is about the worst thing you could possibly do.

OK. These are all good reasons for BT to sit on its hands and do nothing. "Long-term strategies," as Lawrence Haworth, telecoms analyst at Robert Fleming, remarked over the weekend, "do not make for good short-term shareholder value." BT should have been satisfied, the argument runs, with simply paying back vast amounts of its capital to shareholders in the form of special dividends and share buybacks, as so many of its deeply boring and unimaginative peers among the British utilities apparently are. Never mind the fact that the effect thus far has helped to transform them into some of the most hated institutions in the land, undermining the present Government's electoral chances in the process.

Fortunately, however, this is not the way of the world. The business of managing decline obviously has a place in most large organisations, but those that pursue it as a key objective ultimately fail. BT knows about little else outside telecommunications

and related value-added services. What is it supposed to do? Expand into high-margin women's lingerie? Alternatively it might have sat around and awaited the windfall profit tax, or, like British Gas, self-destructed in endless argument with its domestic regulator. Now that shareholders would really have thanked their board for. This is the strategy of despair and rightly BT is having none of it.

BT is proposing to invest its money in a relatively safe enterprise it knows quite a lot about which should, on a five to 10-year view, help put the company at the forefront of developments in one of the world's fastest-growing global businesses. What's so wrong with that?

BT may avoid paying Labour's windfall tax

The fortune BT is spending on MCI is a timely reminder of just what a tempting target it would make for Labour's windfall tax. When it comes to balance sheets, few are as robust as that of BT, as the £5.5bn in cash it is paying out under the MCI deal demonstrates. All this and a 10 per cent share

privatisation, the company will escape the tax if it is calculated on the arbitrary, random and unfair basis of total shareholder return – currently the favoured option.

Labour might just as well calculate the new tax according to how pay scales inside utility boardrooms compare with the national average, for all the difference it would make. Or what about basing it on the combined height of all the executive directors? Better still, levy it in reverse alphabetical order, starting with Yorkshire Water and United Utilities.

There is no decent way of levying this unfortunate tax. All methods suffer from one flaw or another. But perhaps the least bad way might be to calculate it on the basis simply of market capitalisation, since this would at least penalise all privatised utilities in equal proportion to their ability to pay.

Somebody should have a pop at Greycoat

When you are rescued by the likes of UK Active Value Fund, as Greycoat was three years ago, you have to expect the subsequent ride to be uncomfortable. For turnaround funds like this, a year is a long time, let alone three; having watched its 10 per cent shareholding go nowhere in that time, the impatience of UK Active with Greycoat's management is understandable.

At 143.5p, Greycoat's shares stand at a discount of getting on for 30 per cent to the underlying value of the properties it owns minus the debt it took on to develop them.

With a heavy exposure to the relatively buoyant central London property market, Greycoat really ought to be trading at a smaller discount.

Something is plainly awry. Bad management say Myerson and Treger, and a radical solution is the only way out – sell all the properties and give the cash back to shareholders who are better equipped to invest it properly.

Bad shareholders, responds Greycoat – our shares have bombed, but what do you expect with the likes of UK Active scaring the horses? Hoisting a "for sale" sign at this stage in the cycle is madness, the company claims. And what becomes of all the tax losses we managed to build up by misreading the last boom and bust?

There's a grain of truth in both arguments. Butting up shareholders with a 50 per cent dividend hike yesterday, Greycoat tacitly agreed that it was overexposed to a couple of giant developments and would have partly to unwind its portfolio over time. By the same token, it is hardly helpful to have a potential seller of 10 per cent of the shares crashing around the share register undermining the incumbent management.

The best solution for all concerned would be if highlighting the value gap tempts someone else to have a pop at the company.

British Biotech shares slump on 'complicated data'

Magnus Grimond

British Biotech's shares slumped 9 per cent yesterday despite test results which the company claimed provided further confirmation of the effectiveness of its Marimastat anti-cancer treatment. The company, whose shares soared a year ago on hopes for Marimastat, said the phase two trials involving 381 cancer sufferers were the most wide-ranging yet and gave further evidence of the drug's ability to restrain the disease across a wide range of cancers. But it was rewarded with a 21.5p slump in the share price to 207.5p yesterday.

JAMES NOBLE, finance director, said: "It is rather odd that the shares have gone down, because these are by far the most important results we have reported as a company." He ascribed the reaction to the fact that data was "just very, very complicated".

Many analysts, however, downplayed the significance of the results, which for the first

time included information on trials with patients with gastric and colorectal cancers. One analyst said: "Our broad thinking is that the information doesn't really add substantially to what we already know." Questions remained about the dosage regime and the side-effects of the drug, which causes pains in the arm and shoulder when used over a prolonged period.

The data was presented at the European Society for Medical Oncology meeting in Vienna which brings together cancer specialists from all round Europe. British Biotech said the tests confirmed earlier results that showed higher dosage rates of 10mg, 25mg and 50mg twice a day were more effective than lower ones. The group claimed that the outcomes confirmed there was a connection between a reduction in antigens, used as a marker to monitor the progression of cancer, and a reduction in the disease.

"It is absolutely proved that we can reduce the antigens in a group of 381 patients and

where we reduce the antigens people live longer," Mr Noble said. "We obviously think it is the drug's effect, but we can't prove it as yet."

The results in 14 patients suffering from gastric cancers showed half appearing to respond or showing no further progression of the disease. Despite microscopic evidence that Marimastat was coaling tumours in a fibre, as predicted, analysts said the sample size was too small to be significant. Other studies in colorectal, ovarian and pancreatic cancers had shown similar results, Mr Noble said.

Phase three trials under way on Marimastat remain the key to the drug's final approval and launch onto the market, which is unlikely before 1999 or 2000, analysts say. A treatment for pancreatic cancer is likely to be first to market, but external sales forecasts vary widely from \$100m in the first year to \$1bn.

Later this month the group will give phase three test data for its Lexipant treatment



Re-inventing a Colossus: Graham Melmoth, new head of the UK's largest Co-Op group

New Co-Op boss prepares for 21st Century

Nigel Cope

The new chief executive of Britain's largest Co-Operative Society said yesterday that a merger of the group's disparate parts remains a possibility as he seeks to steer the 150-year-old Co-Op movement towards the 21st century.

Graham Melmoth, a 57-year-old Londoner, yesterday took control of the Manchester-based Co-Operative Wholesale Society, a huge but poorly understood organisation facing challenging times.

As the most senior executive within Britain's Co-Op, his brief is to modernise the movement, bring its various parts closer together and make it more competitive.

An attempted merger with its smaller counterpart, the Co-Operative Retail Society failed last year when the two could not agree terms. Many see a merger as essential if the movement is to compete effectively against powerful competitors whose access to stock market capital gives them an advantage.

"I think a merger will happen," Mr Melmoth said. "The

Co-Op has been fragmented but I would like to ensure that the operations of the regions are controlled more centrally."

He wants more emphasis on central management, more investment in its people and more emphasis on strategic planning.

Re-inventing a colossus such as the CWS is a huge task. With annual sales of £3bn, the CWS is the main supplier of goods and services to the individual co-operative retail societies. But it also owns Co-Operative Bank and the Co-Operative Insurance Society. It's high street portfolio includes more than 700 Co-Op shops, 241 travel agents, 346 funeral parlours and a chain of opticians. With 50,000 acres it is the country's biggest farmer.

"My priority is to improve the society's performance. We've got a good spread of assets but I am hoping to get them to perform better," Mr Melmoth said.

His challenge is to fashion a future for a movement which sometimes appears weighed down by its history. Born out of the original Co-Op movement which was started by a group of Rochdale pioneers in 1844, the CWS started life in 1863.

IN BRIEF

• German industrial output fell unexpectedly in September. A fall of 1.8 per cent, the first drop since February, took production to a level 1.5 per cent lower than a year earlier. Both manufacturing and energy output declined during the month. However, the Economics Ministry indicated that the preliminary figure might be revised up substantially. Economists said GDP remained likely to rise by up to 1 per cent in the third quarter after the 1.5 per cent increase in the second quarter.

• The Royal Bank of Scotland subsidiary Citizens Financial Group has agreed to acquire Grove Bank, based in Boston, for \$57m (£35m). Grove, a savings bank, and Greater Boston Bank - which Grove is in the process of acquiring - have assets of \$76bn and 10 branches between them. The deal will bring Citizens' branch network in New England to 240.

• Monument Derivatives has bought the research and bond broking business of the London Bond Broking Company from the Birmingham brokers Albert E Sharp. Monument, an equity derivatives broker on Little, said the acquisition of the new team, which includes the City economist Stephen Lewis, would allow it to expand its research and broking services.

• TI Group has said it will not increase its recommended £189m bid for Forshedala, the Swedish polymer group. TI has been put under pressure from a group of rebel shareholders led, by Henderson Investors, to raise its bid.

• Rank Group is to sell Shearings, its coach holidays business, to a management buyout team backed by NatWest Ventures for an undisclosed sum. The business is expected to fetch £50m-£100m.

• British Airways chairman Sir Colin Marshall said implementation of its planned alliance with AMR Corp until American Airlines could be delayed until after the expiry of its code sharing agreement with USAir Group in April 1997. Sir Colin said he was "hopeful" that BA would win US and EU anti-trust approval for its tie-up with AMR Corp until American Airlines, "but whether we will implement the alliance by 1997 is still to be seen".

• Four bidders have been shortlisted for the proposed privatisation of the Government's loans to UK housing associations. One is a consortium of building societies including Abbey National, Halifax and Nationwide. The others are NatWest Markets and a consortium which includes the Housing Finance Corp, UBS, Barclays and Bank of Scotland. The Prudential Mortgages Corporation has applied only for loans held by the Housing of Wales association. The combined loan portfolios have a book value of almost £1bn.

Greycoat fights back with payout pledge

Tom Stevenson

The acrimonious battle between property developer Greycoat and one of its largest shareholders moved up a gear yesterday with the publication of first-half results and the promise of a 50 per cent dividend rise for the full year.

Greycoat used the issue of its interim figures to call on shareholders to reject a recent demand from Brian Myerson and Julian Treger of UK Active Value Fund that the company sell all its properties and return the proceeds to shareholders.

Peter Thornton, chief executive of Greycoat, said breaking the company up made no sense for three reasons: it would sac-

rifice the inherent growth potential of its central London development sites; it would hang a "closing down sale" sign over the company, reducing the prices it could raise through a disposal; and it would incur sizeable penalties for unwinding various financing hedges.

Greycoat's latest row with UK Active, which holds 10 per cent of the company's shares and which has been on the register since a rescue refinancing in 1993, was prompted two weeks ago when Mr Myerson and Mr Treger called on the company to break itself up as a means of narrowing the widening gap between its share price and the underlying value of its assets.

The gap between the value

of the market attributes to Greycoat's shares and the value of the properties it owns minus its debts is wider than for most of its peers. UK Active Value puts that down to poor management: the company blames concern over the presence of a disgruntled shareholder on the register.

The move by UK Active has been widely seen as an attempt to highlight the value gap and flush out a possible bidder for the company rather than necessarily a genuine call for a break-up of the company. It is thought that number of property companies would be interested in buying Greycoat with perhaps three years of the current property cycle upturn remaining.

Announcing a 123 per cent

rise in interim pre-tax profits from £1.7m to £3.8m, Greycoat promised a full-year dividend of 1.2p, a 50 per cent increase on last year's 0.8p payout. That in turn represented a 33 per cent rise over the previous year's dividend. The company does not pay an interim dividend.

UK Active Value responded to Greycoat's figures with a further condemnation of the company's record: "This is yet again more hollow promises of value to come. Shareholders should ask the promised value will be delivered.

"It is three years since Greycoat was rescued by UKAV and that time the company has failed to convince the market that it has a clear strategy for growth."

Peter Thornton: Fighting move to break up Greycoat

T&N gets asbestos reprise

Magnus Grimond

T&N, the auto components maker, was yesterday given a temporary reprieve from a ruling which could have reopened hundreds of millions of dollars in lawsuits resulting from its past life as an asbestos company.

Even so, the shares slumped 4.5p to 129p as the group warned less buoyant markets and destocking were hitting margins in pistons, friction products and gaskets. It was "particularly difficult to assess the final outcome of the year's results", T&N said.

The stay on asbestos lawsuits came as the US Supreme Court agreed to review a ruling by the Philadelphia third circuit which earlier this year decertified the so-called Georgia system agreed in 1994 for settling claims out of court. As a result of the Supreme Court's intervention, the Georgia procedure will continue to operate while the court review is in progress.

T&N said it expected asbestos litigation charges would continue to be incurred in line with previous estimates of around £25m for the second half of 1996. If the Supreme Court had rejected the request, Georgia would have been formally ended 21 days after the judgement.

Alliance & Leicester investors seek meeting

Investors angry at the terms of the Alliance & Leicester's £2.8bn conversion from a building society to a bank are demanding a special meeting with its directors ahead of the vote to approve conversion, which is due to be held in the London Arena on 10 December.

The Alliance & Leicester has decided to treat all its 2.4 million savers and borrowers the same when it comes to the pay-out of shares.

They will each get 250 shares worth at least £1,000 – a move that has upset some customers who have large sums invested or who have been with the society for many years.

Patrick Mountain, 63, of Somerton, Somerset, a retired businessman and a former agent of the society, said he had received dozens of phone calls.

He is urging people who are angry to write protest letters warning they will withdraw all their savings, except for the amount needed to qualify for the shares.

Asked if possible action by customers posed any threat,

she added: "We don't believe so at the moment."

Meanwhile the two founders of the Halifax Action Group, Serge Loure and Peter Judge, said they would again stand for election to the Halifax board and claimed the conversion process was "taking far too long". The Halifax, which has 9 million customers, is set to become a bank in June 1997.

Details of the flotation were announced two years ago and it is anticipated that borrowers and savers will receive an average of £1,000 each.

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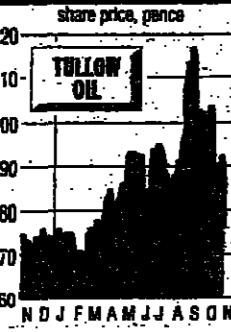
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market report / shares

DATA BANK

FTSE 100	3928.1 - 20.4
FTSE 250	4418.4 - 10.8
FTSE 350	1962.4 - 9.0
SEAO VOLUME	648.8m shares, 40,351 bargains
Gilt Index	93.37 - 0.29

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Busy BT prevents rout as interest rate gloom emerges

BT prevented a Footsie rout. The proposed £1.3bn deal with US group MCI helped the telecom giant ring up the day's best blue chip gain and encouraged other telephone shares. Footsie ended 20.4 points down at 3,928.1 after an early 7.7 advance.

At one time BT was up 33p to 384p. But for the sixth time in a year the charge faltered in the 380p area and the shares ended with a 22p gain to 373p.

In turnover terms BT was also the dominant force.

Seac volume of 82.4 million shares out of an uninspiring stock market total of 648.8m.

Vodafone, moving ahead last week on demerger and AT&T bid hopes, improved 15p to 241p and Orange edged up 1.5p to 185.5p. But Cable and Wireless, which rejected the BT takeover offer this year, fell 6p to 483.5p.

BSkyB was also unsettled by

the planned transatlantic deal. It fell 22p to 547p on thoughts about the powerful challenge the giant new grouping could represent and MCI's 13.5 per cent stake in Rupert Murdoch's News International which is using its BSkyB shares in a £1bn cash-raising exercise.

Details of the Murdoch cash scheme are about to be completed.

The satellite television station has presented a poor picture since it hit a peak of 597p last month.

The US presidential elections, the lowering of the Government's majority to just one, talk of interest rate increases in the new year and the strong pound prompted blue chips to back-pedal. Reports of a US missile attack on an Iraqi air defence site was another inhibiting influence.

Oil remained weak with Tullow Oil down 8p to 76p. The shares have come back from 21.5p to 207.5p.



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

118p since it reported disappointing drilling results in Pak-

istan. Electricity managed a few modest gains as bid hopes continued to flicker; East Midlands Electricity put on 5.5p to 550p. The communication sector remained on bid alert with Carlton Communications, up changing at 491p, said to be preparing to strike with a few traders, to the surprise of the majority, pointing to its likely target.

British Biotech's keenly awaited research update was less encouraging than many had hoped and the shares fell 21.5p to 207.5p.

Kwik Save, figures on Thursday, remained depressed with a 7p fall to 302p; Shoprite reported interim profits of £958,000, fell 1.5p to 18p.

Kingfisher surrendered 11p to 635p on worries it is about to unleash another French strike - taking over a do-it-

yourself operation.

Chelsea Village, the football club, had an eventful session with the price at one time nudging 120p. The shares closed at 113.5p, up 16p. Suggestions that the death of vice-chairman Matthew Harding could lead to takeover action, with even legendary trader George Soros being men-

tioned as a possible predator, created the excitement. Granada was another name in the frame. Manchester United, conquered by Chelsea over the weekend, had to sacrifice another 13.5p to 515p.

Wellman, the engineer hit

last week by a profits warning, managed a modest rally, up 2p to 33.5p. There are suggestions the fall - from 49p - has been overdone. It would appear

profits this year could emerge at a reasonable £5m which has prompted one stockbroker, thought to be James Capel, to put a 42p price tag on the shares.

There is also talk the fall group, remained suspended at 39.5p. There is a belief re-

tailer Philip Green is interested in buying into the frame.

Property group Burford was

little changed at 136.5p as

chief executive Nick Leslau

cashed in options, raising more

than £5m. Barclay de Zoste

Wadd placed the shares at

TAKING STOCK

Expect action from Jacobs Holdings, the transport group being developed by Michael Kinghoff. It is thought to be near to announcing a substantial acquisition. The shares were little changed at 72.5p.

Austin Friars, the stockbroker, is emerging as a leading player on the fringe OTEX share market. Today it will launch the flotation of a restaurant company called Posh People. It already has five firms traded on OTEX.

Lanka Trust, the former New Guernsey Securities Trust set for an exciting run under Andrew Regan, is thought to have its eyes on buying the NAAFL, the military support service. Dealings started in the new slim-line shares; they moved up to 16p to 207.5p.

Stock	Price	Change	Yield	PE Ratio	Stock	Price	Change	Yield	PE Ratio
Alcoholic Beverages									
ABF Group	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABF Group	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Amstel	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	Amstel	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Amstel	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	Amstel	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Banks, Merchant									
ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Banks, Retail									
ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABN Amro	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Breweries, Pub & Restaurant									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Building/Construction									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Building Materials									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Chemicals									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Engineering									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Electronics									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Food Manufacturers									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Gas Distribution									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
Health Care									
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0	ABP	100.0	-1.0	4.0	15.0
ABP	100.0</td								

The 'R' word will return to haunt next President

The catch-phrase, "It's the economy, stupid," seems more appropriate to this US presidential election than to the last. For the strength of the economy – very evident here in Chicago and the Midwest – seems to be President Clinton's strongest card. The ill-temper of the electorate seems to have faded, or rather the "winners" in the economy seem confident that they will continue to do well, while the "losers" won't.

But from an economic point of view perhaps the most interesting question is whether the surge of popular support for the incumbent marks a high point in US economic self-confidence. Put more strongly, could the election itself signal the end of the boom?

That is not to suggest a causal link between politics and economics; simply to say that there are obvious signs the US economy cannot continue on its present trajectory. It must slow down and the question is whether it will do so gently, or whether there will be some discontinuity or shock.

A few weeks ago the US financial magazine, *Barron's*, ran a story warning about a recession in the middle of next year – the "R" word is being discussed in the press. Foremost among the reasons for concern is expansion's sheer longevity, the third-longest this century.

Other causes for unease include the level of share prices (of course), and the level of consumer debt at around 80 per cent of income. Consumers make mistakes, for the level of default on this debt is at record levels, too.

At any rate, the first half of the new presidency will be dominated by the "R" word: concern about the next recession. The economic forecasters are sketching two broad outlooks. One is that next year or 18 months will see a period of slow growth, say 2 per cent. There has been evidence that the economy has been slowing



Hamish McRae
in Chicago

One is struck by the contrast between the strength and quality of big corporations and the financial fragility of many families

in the last two months: the housing market has slipped, with a fall in new home sales; exports, while growing, have been curbed by the rise in the dollar since the spring; other leading indicators of the economy, which US economy-watchers examine, like the Chicago Purchasing Manager's Index, have been falling in recent months, suggesting less buoyant expectations within manufacturing industry.

Perhaps most importantly, employment growth (what Americans call non-farm payrolls) seems to have tailed off, and unemployment, at what to European eyes is an enviable low 5.2 per cent, may hold at that level rather than fall further. It may be possible to squeeze unemployment lower still, but it must be close to an all-time peak. While companies have cleaned up their balance

sheets, people have not. So these figures take the view that that there is a very robust company sector able to cope with tough times, but individuals or families who run their affairs in a much less prudent manner.

Individuals say they are concerned about insecurity when questioned in polls, but act as though they are not.

The worry, therefore, is that if there is some unexpected shock such as a rise in short-term interest rates or a sharp fall on Wall Street, companies will be fine, but people won't. A rise in short-term rates in the States would not hit the housing market as it would in the UK because mortgages are not so closely linked to short-term interest rates. But consumer borrowing is linked and so a rise would have an enormous impact on that. Further, a large proportion of personal assets are in mutual fund accounts, which people use as bank accounts. Imagine having most spare cash held not in a building society or bank, but in a unit trust.

The other odd feature is the assumption of stability. Britons know the pound can plunge and that interest rates can go up as well as down.

In the US, perhaps particularly in the Mid-west, it is different. The economy carries on regardless of what happens in Washington.

The continued competence of the Fed is taken as read. Maybe this is a function of the central bank having a fair measure of independence, or the widespread assumption that the result of today's election will be the continued balanced ticket – a Democrat president and a Republican congress.

But it may also be that Americans have forgotten about economic shocks. The last four years have seen uninterrupted, steady growth with very little signs of inflation. This election may not mark the end of this slow boom, but it would be absolutely astounding were there to be another four years like the last.

The contrast shows in the difference between company indebtedness, half its level relative to profits compared with 10 years ago, and personal indebtedness, 50 per cent higher than it was then and at an all-time peak. While companies have cleaned up their balance

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The worry, therefore, is that if there is some unexpected shock such as a rise in short-term interest rates or a sharp fall on Wall Street, companies will be fine, but people won't. A rise in short-term rates in the States would not hit the housing market as it would in the UK because mortgages are not so closely linked to short-term interest rates. But consumer borrowing is linked and so a rise would have an enormous impact on that. Further, a large proportion of personal assets are in mutual fund accounts, which people use as bank accounts. Imagine having most spare cash held not in a building society or bank, but in a unit trust.

The other odd feature is the assumption of stability. Britons know the pound can plunge and that interest rates can go up as well as down.

In the US, perhaps particularly in the Mid-west, it is different. The economy carries on regardless of what happens in Washington.

The continued competence of the Fed is taken as read. Maybe this is a function of the central bank having a fair measure of independence, or the widespread assumption that the result of today's election will be the continued balanced ticket – a Democrat president and a Republican congress.

But it may also be that Americans have forgotten about economic shocks. The last four years have seen uninterrupted, steady growth with very little signs of inflation. This election may not mark the end of this slow boom, but it would be absolutely astounding were there to be another four years like the last.

The contrast shows in the difference between company indebtedness, half its level relative to profits compared with 10 years ago, and personal indebtedness, 50 per cent higher than it was then and at an all-time peak. While companies have cleaned up their balance

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sport

Difficult art makes bigger splash

'Synchro' is no longer the laughing stock of sport, says Mike Rowbottom

The code of behaviour at Wigan's international pool was violated at the weekend. While those in the water refrained as requested from running, petting, bombing, shoving, pushing, ducking, spitting and smoking – at least as far as one could judge – the ban on acrobatics was flagrantly disregarded.

With more athletic endeavour than ever before, 101 competitors in what was the 22nd National Synchronised Swimming Championships went through their unlikely motions, watched by a small but knowledgeable audience.

It is 12 years since the sport bobbed into the public consciousness at the 1984 Olympics. Its peculiar combination of strenuous activity and a fixed grin quickly established itself as a target for ridicule. Carolyn Wilson, one of the two British competitors in Los Angeles, remembers well the reaction in media circles at the time.

"We got some quite negative publicity from people like Des Lynam," she recalled. "That is the risk run by all sports with an artistic element. People have an opinion about it."

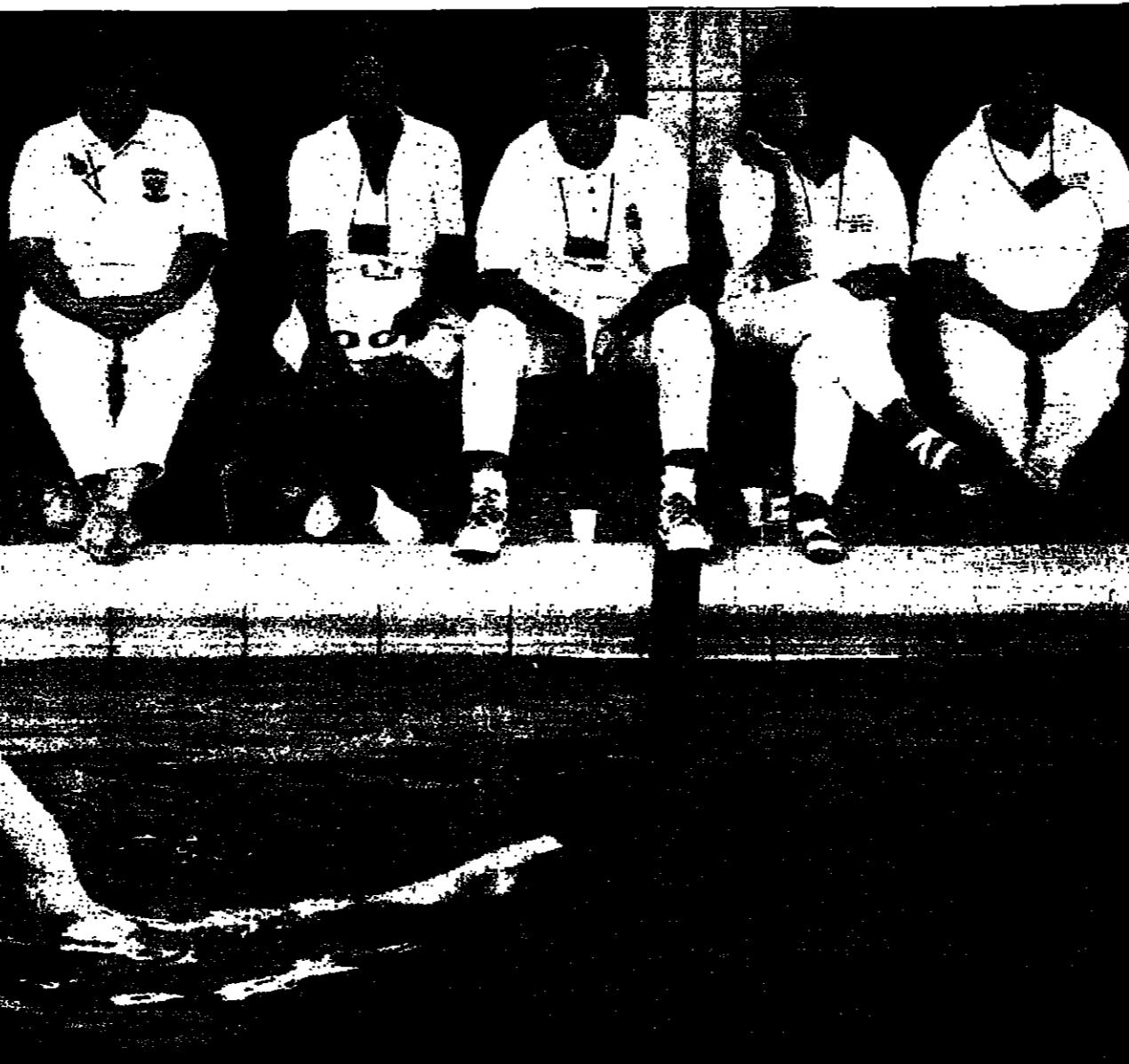
"We are used to seeing sport in terms of men grovelling about on the rugby field, but sport shouldn't just be about sweating and grimacing. It can also be about people enjoying themselves."

Sweating and grimacing will never have a place in the world of synchro, but those who run the sport have been smart enough to realise sequins and smiles is also a losing combination in the long term.

In an effort to counteract the sport's glamorous excesses and absurdities, the emphasis has been shifted towards technical expertise, which now carries 60 per cent of marks in competition, leaving artistic impression as the lesser element.

The sport as a whole now reacts to sequins like Dracula to a crucifix. Costumes must be of a minimum size after the embarrassments of the late Eighties. And as for the smiling, let Andrea Holland, a former European champion who coached Britain's 1992 Olympic team, explain the art of hyperventilating.

In tandem with these changes,



The judges watch a competitor go through her paces at the National Synchronised Swimming Championships in Wigan. Photograph: Robert Hallam

is a sport that you have to try and make look easy, so people would smile to impress the judges. Nowadays, however, judges are better informed and know what technical aspects to look for.

"And if the routine is set to serious music, then the expressions have to reflect that. We don't want smiling all the time."

The sport has also acted to discourage freakish displays of breath-holding, another time-honoured tactic to impress the judges. Such tactics were leading to instances of girls blacking out – on one occasion, in Sweden, a competitor died after hyperventilating.

In tandem with these changes,

there has been an increasing awareness of the need for proper endurance training. Here is a typical day at training camp for Britain's elite performers, as described by Ann Webb, one of the British coaches:

"Three-mile run before breakfast. Then 200 stand-ups on chairs to warm up. Then three hours working in the pool. Three more hours swimming. Then a one and a half hour walk-through in the water, then it does make me angry," she said.

The routine which Carlsen and her colleagues went through – a celebration of the Atlanta Games, with elements representing running, javelin

throwing and high jumping – was faintly ironic, given that Britain missed out on qualifying for the team competition, which is now the sole Olympic event, by one place.

"When I have been training for nine hours in a freezing cold pool, pushing my body to the limits, and someone comes up to me and says what I do is stupid, that it's just a matter of swimming, sticking my legs in the air and splashing around in the water, then it does make me angry," she said.

"I don't think the Government in this country takes sport that seriously," she added. "They think that we are still in

the 1930's, and that Britain can just turn up and win off an hour a day's training. But so much has changed in this sport in the last 10 years. To do it properly, you have to be full-time."

It is a familiar situation, replicated in almost any sport you care to name in this country. But the continuing international popularity of synchronised swimming – it has been the first sport to sell out at each of the last three Olympics – is likely to provide the necessary stimulus to the domestic scene, if only every four years.

In the meantime, the 23rd National Synchronised Swimming Championships are in need of a sponsor...

RACING RESULTS

NEWCASTLE

1.25: 1. SILENT GUEST (R Gammie) 3:1-2. The B. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £2.80, £2.20, £2.70, DP: £5.00, CSF: £2.80, Computer Straight Forecast: £7.52.

1.25: 1. BILLINGBROOK (R Johnson) 14:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £15.40, £2.00, £1.50, DP: £14.30, CSF: £2.24, Non Runner, Strongbow.

2.25: 1. STAN'S YOUR MAN (R Gammie) 7:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £3.70, £1.70, £1.40, £1.70, DP: £4.10, CSF: £10.84, Tric: £24.50.

2.25: 1. BILLY THE KID (R Johnson) 6:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £10.00, £1.50, CSF: £2.70, £4.30, DP: £2.50, CSF: £1.11.

2.25: 1. BILLY THE KID (R Johnson) 7:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £10.00, £1.50, CSF: £2.70, £4.30, DP: £2.50, CSF: £1.11.

2.25: 1. BLAZING DAWN (R Gammie) 4:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £10.00, £1.50, CSF: £2.70, £4.30, DP: £2.50, CSF: £1.11.

2.25: 1. BILLY THE KID (R Johnson) 5:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £10.00, £1.50, CSF: £2.70, £4.30, DP: £2.50, CSF: £1.11.

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PLUMPTON

1.25: 1. BANISTER (R Johnson) 11:2-3. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £19.60, Quadrup: £17.80, Tric: £20.63, Place: £1.96.

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SOUTHWELL

1.25: 1. GIDDY (R Johnson) 8:1-2. 2. 1.1. 3. 1.1. 4. 1.1. 5. 1.1. 6. 1.1. 7. 1.1. 8. 1.1. 9. 1.1. 10. 1.1. 11. 1.1. 12. 1.1. Total: £10.00, £1.50, CSF: £2.70, £4.30, DP: £2.50, CSF: £1.11.

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Glover sets Fox on November run

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON

By the time the clocks go back Jeremy Glover's horses are usually going forward, and quickly. The Nottinghamshire trainer has earned a reputation as a man who comes swooping into play as the nights draw in, a distinction that is exemplified by four wins in the Cambridgeshire at leaf-strewn Newmarket.

For a person of his limited

experience, Glover's record in the first leg of the Autumn Double is quite astounding.

The former professional jockey of 18 years has held a licence for only 12 seasons (to come) and an application to become a Jockey Club starter in 1978 was rejected, yet his name is etched alongside Balthus

(1987), Rambo's Hall (1989 and 1992) and now Clifton Fox, who won this year's race a month ago.

"We have winners right the way through the season, but my horses always seem to come to themselves at their best in the autumn," Glover said yesterday. "I recognize that and if I have a handicapper we plan it from a long way out. This horse had the Cambridgeshire as his target from the start of the year and he was improving enough to beat the handicapper. I just had to get him right at the right time."

The 52-year-old trainer now has more bookmakers' sponsorship money in the viewing than Clifton Fox is paid out in the November Handicap at Doncaster on Saturday. Certain participation will not be con-

firmed until later in the week, though Glover wants to run, especially as his four-year-old gave such a good account of himself in a Listed contest at Newmarket on Friday.

"There were four of them really going at it from six furlongs out and I think he was in the van

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: So Intrepid
(Redcar 3.35).
NHS Catris
(Redcar 2.05)

for too long," Glover said of Clifton Fox, who was beaten only two necks. "He had a harder race than he had in the Cambridgeshire, but he's all right."

The colt himself, it must be

said, may have a different report

on his well-being, as Nigel Day, Friday's partner, was suspended for two days for using his whip with unreasonable frequency.

If Clifton Fox needs recuperation this week he could have no better hostel than the Pinewood Stables at Garburton near Worksop. Next door there is a slab of National Trust territory they call Clumber Park; 20,000 acres of parkland which means the Glover string hardly ever comes across its own hoofprints.

Date Star may be housed in the more horse-intensive environs of Matlock, but he too transported a winner last time. Malcolm Jefferson's horse, who was runner-up in the November Handicap 12 months ago, was ridden in his preparatory race at Nottingham 12 days ago by

Kieren Fallon. The Irishman dropped his hand to lose second place and was subsequently himself dropped from the racecourse.

Nevertheless, Fallon will emerge from his suspension with brown-papered package under his arm before the weekend, and again rides Date Star even though he is likely to put up 1lb overweight.

"I don't think I'll make a lot of difference and it's better to have him carry a little bit of overweight than to have a fresh jockey," Jefferson said yesterday. "Kieren knows him so well and I think his experience of the horse is worth more than 1lb."

After Saturday, Date Star, the winner of last year's Festival bumper, will return to a hurling career which has so far

been limited to two outings (and one completion).

"Depending on how he is I may even run him the following week in a handicap hurdle at Cheltenham," Jefferson said. "Otherwise I'd like him to have about four races, nicely spaced out, so that he can get some jumping experience before the Champion Hurdle."

Twenty horses headed by David Elewirth's top-weight Muse, have stood strong ground for the Rote Silver Trophy at Chepstow on Saturday. The sponsor yesterday installed Castle Sweep as the 4-1 favourite for the extended two and a half mile hurdle race. Jenny Pinman, who trained last year's winner 40-1 Jibber The Kibber, is represented this time by Jet Rules and Arithmetic.



Clifton Fox: 12-1 for Saturday's big race at Doncaster

Students denied choice by A-level disputes

Judith Judd

Education Editor

University students will be forced to accept what is offered if an appeal against their A-level grades is held up, says a popular teacher who has got into trouble.

At present, students accept and resit courses in A-levels as soon as A-level results are published.

But David Llewellyn, 39, a former chairman of the Independent Appeals Authority, a School Examinations and Assessment Council committee, has come under fire for his comments on the new A-level disputes, which are due to start in September.

He claims that students will be forced to take what is offered.

The authority, which handles appeals of exam grade appeals, has issued a statement that says students will be forced to take what is offered if the new A-level disputes are not accepted.

Mr Llewellyn said: "I have seen a number of cases where students have been offered a choice of subjects, but have been told that they must take what is offered.

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sport

He does not want to clutter up the England squad with players who are superior to those he has nurtured over the years

One of the most striking aspects of what is already a remarkable season is the impact which rugby league players have made. Sometimes they are players who have re-transferred their allegiance, such as Scott Quinnell of Richmond (as he hopes will turn out to be the case: permanently) Viva Tuigamala of Wasps. Sometimes they are performers who had never played union regularly before this season and will shortly return to league, such as Gary Connolly of Harlequins. They have always transformed their club's play for the better.

There has been a curious reluctance to acknowledge this truth. After the first Wigan-Bath match in the summer, followers of union said that

of course Wigan beat Bath at league. It was only to be expected. But Bath would beat Wigan at union, although maybe not so comprehensively.

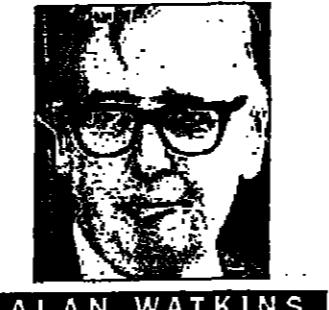
Wigan's triumph in the Middlesex Sevens caused some people to revise their forecast, and to admit that perhaps Wigan might beat Bath after all at Twickenham. Superficially, however, things turned out as had been expected originally, with Bath winning and Wigan showing an unexpected ineptitude in the set-pieces, particularly the scrums.

But the superiority of the Wigan players individually, the backs at any rate, became evident in the second half and even more clear in the last quarter. The league players were

stronger, faster, fitter and, above all, more creative. Jason Robinson could sidestep, swerve or jink round not just one opponent but several – an art some of us thought had gone with Gerald Davies.

This season, Robinson has been delighting the crowds at Bath, playing first on the wing and, more recently, at full-back. So has the other former Wigan player Henry Paul at centre. Both he and his brother, Robbie of Harlequins, are ineligible to play for England because they are New Zealanders. The same goes for Tuigamala.

But of eligible former league players, Jack Rowell, the England coach, has recalled only Jim Fallon of Richmond to the national squad.



ALAN WATKINS

In my opinion, Jon Bentley of Newcastle, formerly of Halifax RL and before that of Sale (where, in 1988, he won three England caps), is at least as good a wing. On present form, Robinson, who is much

younger, is the clear superior of both. So far, Martin Offiah of Bedford has not set the fields alight and has been troubled by a mysterious toe injury. Nevertheless, I have little doubt about the composition of the strongest English three-quarter line: Robinson, Connolly, Will Carling and Offiah.

Offiah has already said he is free to play for England. There may be doubts about how free Robinson is. Certainly Connolly is due to go back north in the new year. But if Wigan will release him, there is no legal reason why he should not play for England in the Five Nations. Why does not Rowell try to exercise his persuasive skills, for which he is apparently well known?

Gibbs of Swansea has been fully readmitted to the fold, with David Young of Cardiff and Richard Webster of Bath bowering on the fringes.

It is evident that Wales' best centre combination is Gibbs with Allan Bateman, who is playing brilliantly for Richmond, outside him, Scott Quinnell of the same club will presumably be back at No 8 once his payment problems have been settled.

The best Welsh back five would then be: Gareth Llewellyn (Harlequins), Craig Quinnell (Richmond), Paul Moriarty (Swansea), Scott Quinnell (Richmond), Richard Webster (Bath). Rowell, the victim of Welsh parochialism as much as of anti-league prejudice, is even less likely than Rowell to do the right thing.

Rowell and the men who would be king

Chris Hewett on the problems facing the England coach, who names his new captain today

Jack Rowell is on his Jack Jones, so to speak. Two and a half years after inheriting a solid, functional and generally successful national side from his predecessor, Geoff Cooke, the England coach now finds himself in the uncomfortable position of having to back his own judgement on the most exposed selection issue of them all: the captaincy.

What is more, he must make some shrewd decisions on the shape of his side for the Five Nations' Championship while keeping one eye on the 1999 World Cup. Rowell went to the 1995 tournament in South Africa with Cooke's legacy almost completely intact and while he moved gingerly into reshape and remodel mode last season, he still had to pull an old nag by the name of Dean Richards out of the knackers' yard to save the day at Murrayfield. When he looks down from the high wire this time, that particular safety net will be conspicuous by its absence.

The new leader is due to be named at Twickenham today and the job description has changed almost completely since Cooke appointed Will Carling in 1988. Indeed, Carling transformed it himself through his various mix of undeniable glamour, naked ambition and almost laughable naivete. You do not hob-nob with rugby and make public jokes about the flatulent habits of faintly ridiculous but still influential people and then hope that the front pages will leave you alone.

Assuming that Rowell has decided against appointing a stop-gap captain – and 1995 is far enough away to invalidate the need for one – he must not only choose a partner with whom he feels he can work and who can handle the post-Carling pressures but one capable of bridging the gap between the selectors and the squad. That gap was allowed to grow dangerously wide at times last season as Carling distanced himself from his coach, and now that Rowell is in a position to name his own man, he had better get it right.

Lawrence Dallaglio has been the front-runner since Carling stepped down after victory over the Irish last March. Confident, approachable and highly capable in all three back-row positions, he forged his leadership skills on the hoof by stabilising a Wasps side that was



Lawrence Dallaglio

Age: 24; Club: Wasps; Caps: 6.

Red-hot favourite for the succession since Will Carling bowed out last spring, Dallaglio is the youngest of the obvious contenders but his versatility as a player, combined with a measured approach off the field, persuaded Jack Rowell to describe him as the "English François Pienaar". The best long-term option.

Jason Leonard

Age: 28; Club: Harlequins; Caps: 49.

Hugely popular prop forward who, like Dallaglio, gives the England selectors elbow room through an ability to play in more than one position. Leonard has made more international appearances than all his main rivals put together and his success in bonding a disparate Quins side this season makes him a decent outside threat.

Phil de Glanville

Age: 28; Club: Bath; Caps: 16.

Obviously captaincy material from the day he joined Bath from college in 1990, de Glanville fits precisely into the traditional mould of an England skipper. He has a far harder edge than many imagine, but the resurgent form of both Carling and his own club-mate, Jeremy Guscott, leaves him vulnerable on the selection front.

Tim Rodber

Age: 27; Club: Northampton; Caps: 25.

There was a time when Rodber's army background and fierce patriotic fervour persuaded many to stamp him with the Future England Captain label. Then came his sending off in Port Elizabeth in 1994 – he was only the second man to be dismissed while wearing the national jersey – and he is still making up the lost ground.

the point of collapse in the aftermath of Rob Andrew's acrimonious departure for Newcastle.

In truth, Dallaglio has not enjoyed the best of months. After a bright enough start to the campaign he picked and lost arguments with referees during the defeats by Gloucester and Cardiff and then found himself on the wrong end of an embarrassing pasting in Limerick as Munster effectively ended Wasps' interest in the European Cup.

Since then, though, the Londoners have worked themselves back up to speed and if Rowell

really did make up his mind on the captaincy back in September, as he insists, then England may well have a half-Italian skipper by this afternoon.

The blindingly obvious does not always appeal to a man of Rowell's paradoxical character, however, hence the presence of one or two dark horses in the stalls. The word on the street alternated between Phil de Glanville, the Bath captain, and Tim Rodber, his counterpart at Northampton, before coming up with a wholly new suggestion in the shape of Jason Leonard, the most popular forward in the current

squad as well as the most experienced.

Once Rowell has gone public on his choice, he then has to find himself a side. If that sounds harsh in the light of England's Five Nations victory last season, a glance at the all-important spine of the team confirms the sentiment. All five central positions are up for grabs, from full-back through the half-backs and hooker to No 8, and if anyone tells Big Jack that competition for places is what coaches are supposed to yearn for, he might well get a thick ear.

While he steers well clear of

entering into a public debate on the matter, Rowell is deeply concerned about a number of key positions outside the scrum.

Tim Stimpson of Newcastle is within touching distance of a debut at full-back against Italy on 23 November, but, much to the England hierarchy's disgust, his goal-kicking opportunities at club level have been seriously restricted by Andrew. That makes it awkward for Rowell to select the non-kicking Mike Catt at stand-off, even though his running skills would be in perfect harmony with a dynamic three-quarter line almost soaked in pace.

England are better placed as scrum-half, especially now that the supremely arrogant Austin Healey is finding his feet at Leicester and proving himself a worthy contender alongside Kyran Bracken, Andy Go-marsall and the incumbent, Matt Dawson. But there is a decision to be made at hooker,

where Mark Regan is struggling both with injury and with the brilliant Gloucester prospect Phil Greening. And that big Jack's nightmare, Rodber can draw on the experience of 25 caps but has shown nothing to suggest that he is playing better than Chris Sheasby, Tony D'Urso or

Steve Ojomoh, whose European Cup performance against Dax 10 days ago was nothing short of world class. All this and Ben Clarke too.

Elsewhere, the options are more straightforward. Jon Sleighatholme and Adedayo Adebayo are expected to form a Bath partnership on the wings with Tony Underwood applying pressure on both. Carling should resume his midfield partnership with Jeremy Guscott; Graham Rowntree and Leonard can expect to stay in the front row despite the best efforts of Leicester's Darren Garforth, and if Rowell de-

cides that Garath Archer's indiscretions have taken him beyond the pale, Simon Shaw of Bristol will probably partner Martin Johnson at lock.

But whereas John Hart can reel off his New Zealand spine with his eyes shut – Cullen, Mehrtens, Marshall, Fitzpatrick, Brooke, end of story – Rowell must perm five from the best part of 20 in an effort to give England a new backbone. Until he settles on that quintet, his side will continue to look seriously vulnerable both in the European theatre and, more importantly, on the world stage.

Andrew's threat ensures postponement

Rob Andrew was not exactly renowned for his gambler's instinct during the decade he spent in the England team, but he has acquired a mean line in brinkmanship since falling under the influence of Sir John Hall at Newcastle, writes Chris Hewett. Yesterday his latest venture into the risk business paid healthy dividends when his club's fixture with Rotherham was postponed from this weekend until March. Andrew had threatened to withdraw six of his players from international and representative duty this weekend after Rotherham insisted that the League

organisation (Epruc), the debate went all the way to the International Board, who sanctioned a fixture deferral. It now seems likely that Newcastle's home game with Richmond, the other favourites for promotion to League One, will be shifted from its current 18 January date because players from both sides are likely to be involved in the opening round of the Five Nations' Championship.

Meanwhile, Epruc officials will meet tomorrow to discuss setting up a fund for members most at risk from the bank manager. The political stand-off

between Epruc and the Rugby Football Union has delayed the signing of a multi-million pound broadcasting deal with BSkyB and has left several of the more vulnerable clubs staring into a financial black hole. Representatives from the richer outifts – Newcastle, Harlequins, Bath and Richmond among them – are likely to be asked to bail out the smaller with loans of up to £200,000.

Rory Jenkins, the uncapped Harlequins flanker, has been called into the England squad for tomorrow's training session at Bisham Abbey.

Wasps' need means Reed misses out

Andy Reed, the Scotland and Lions lock, yesterday became the latest casualty of the club versus country issue. The Wasps forward was originally named in the squad for the Scotland A match against South Africa A at Hawick on Friday night but is needed for his club's Anglo-Welsh League game at Pontypridd tomorrow and was not able to attend the training sessions.

Doug Morgan, the Scotland

A team manager, announcing a

squad of 21 for Friday's match,

said: "We picked Reed initially

in our squad but Wasps re-

quired him for their match on Wednesday night. I felt that this was not the ideal preparation for a Scotland A game. Proper preparation is vital and that means players attending squad sessions."

George Graham will miss the Scotland A game through injury. The former rugby league forward was selected to play against Australia last Wednesday but had to withdraw because of a calf injury.

The Scotland A squad shows

several changes to the 21 on

duty at Galashiels last Wednes-

day for the Australians' open-

ing tour match in Scotland. The significant newcomer among the backs is the wing James Craig, while also in the squad is Watsonians full-back Derrick Lee.

In the forwards, there is promotion for locks Stuart Grimes and Scott Aitken, who have performed well in Heineken European Cup matches this season, and there is a recall for the capped prop John Manson, who was out of action

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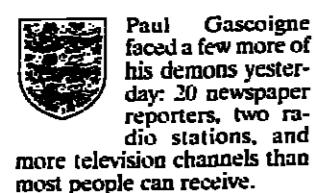
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INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL: Troubled England midfielder reveals 'the rage inside' that has driven him to seek counselling

Gascoigne enters the confessional

GLENN MOORE
Football Correspondent



Paul Gascoigne faced a few more of his demons yesterday: 20 newspaper reporters, two radio stations, and more television channels than most people can receive.

A confessional press conference after England's first day of training for Saturday's World Cup tie in Georgia was another small step on Gascoigne's road to redemption.

It followed a backwards move at the weekend, when Gascoigne lost much of the residual sympathy there is for him by 'looking deep into his tortured soul' exclusively for the *News of the World*. There was, the newspaper announced, no fee - yet neither was there any mention of a contribution to charities supporting battered wives' refuges.

Representatives of the 40 million-plus Britons who do not read the Sunday tabloid were told yesterday that Gascoigne regretted 'the thing that happened with my wife'. He regretted 'it' five times, but he could not quite bring himself to use the words 'wife-beating'.

Glenn Hoddle could, stung by suggestions that by picking Gascoigne he had condoned the practice, he responded: 'This does not send a message out that I am backing wife-beaters, that I condone everything he has done. I am trying to ensure he never does it again.'

The England coach 'rode shotgun' alongside Gascoigne in Bisham Abbey's wood-panelled Elizabethan Room yesterday. Portraits of Charles II and his Portuguese wife, Catherine of Braganza, stared down from the walls flanked by the phalanx of TV crews.

United rule out Giggs

Ryan Giggs and Nathan Blake have been excluded from the Wales squad for Saturday's World Cup qualifier against the Netherlands in Eindhoven.

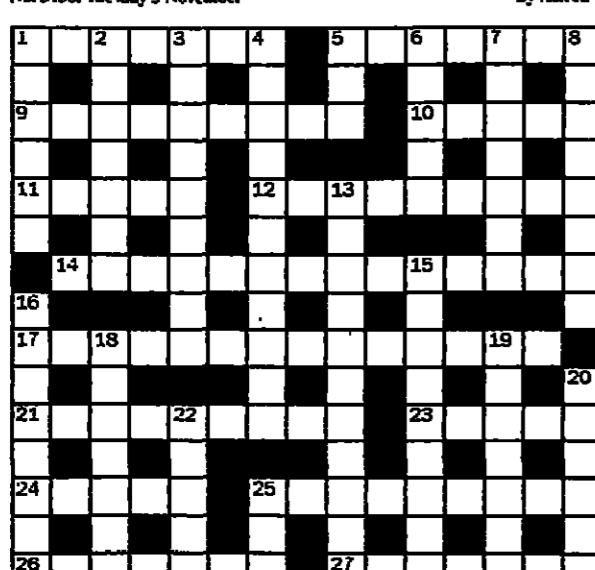
Giggs, who has missed Manchester United's last six games with a calf strain, has been replaced by Birmingham's Jason Bowen, while the Liverpool youngster Lee Jones steps in for Blake of Sheffield United.

Colin Hendry has been passed fit to play in Scotland's World Cup qualifier against Sweden at Ibrox on Sunday. The Blackburn defender safely negotiated his comeback game against Liverpool on Sunday, after being absent for a month following a groin operation.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3136. Tuesday 5 November

By Adred



Mondays Solution

MONDAY'S SOLUTION

ACROSS
1 In which one's cruel as a rule (7)
5 About to crease and collapse (7)
9 Complaint I had after house became not quite solid (9)
10 Expenses of street in Greek island (5)
11 Terrorism's not altogether a mistake (5)
12 Cruel description of three-suited hand? (9)
14 This Leander was idolised (4-10)
17 Colleague's position when confronting anaesthetist? (8-6)
21 Shade of sad Prince? (5,4)
23 Stop beloved embracing bachelor (5)
24 Fear keeping right? Exactly (5)
25 Two crabs I found crawling in rubbish (4-1-4)

26 Train? English can in Paris street? (7)
27 Centre of spring festivities which are allowed by European (7)
1 One trying the Northern English chemical (6)
2 Sorrow shown about code (7)
3 No fair use could be described as wicked (9)
4 One's accommodating to teenagers? (5,6)
5 King Jeff Queen, say, being a boulder (3)
6 Crude diamonds are not reduced (5)
7 Decorate ceiling? It's to see what paper's like (5-2)
8 Part of New York with no story? (4,4)
9 A distinctly overwhelming presence? (11)

ALAN NIXON

Blackburn Rovers are to seek permission to approach three managers: Howard Kendall, Bruce Rioch and Peter Reid - about the vacancy at Ewood Park.

The Rovers owner Jack Walker and the chairman Robert Coar, who want the new man in position by the home game against Chelsea on 16 November, have shortlisted the trio for the job that could carry a £500,000 a year salary after being turned down by Terry Venables.

Sheffield United, Queen's Park Rangers and Sunderland are to be asked to give the go-ahead for negotiations to begin.

Kendall, who has managed Rovers before, has a release clause in his contract should a Premier League side show interest in his services.

Rioch works without a contract at QPR where he is Stewart Houston's No. 2, while Reid, the outsider who has turned Sunderland around on a shoestring budget, is expected to be attracted by the chance to work

THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN JUST STICKING YOUR

Mike Rowbottom on the lambent of the Synchroset



Paul Gascoigne makes his presence felt by David Platt (left) in training yesterday while Ian Wright watches from a distance

Photograph: Peter L

Italy call for Ravanelli and Di Matteo

Fabrizio Ravanelli, the Middlesbrough striker, and the Chelsea midfielder Roberto di Matteo are on their way to Sarajevo to play for Italy in a friendly against Bosnia tomorrow.

It took an Italian journalist to raise the conundrum: 'If he becomes an ordinary person, will he also become an ordinary footballer?'

One thought of Eric Cantona as Hoddle replied: 'I don't know.'

He will have to adjust his game. There are moments of magic he can still conjure up,

and although they might be less frequent, he can be part of the jigsaw in many other ways.'

It's a sad day, but these things happen,' Hoddle said.

'I needed the players to be men on the pitch, but I'm afraid all too often they didn't do it for me. The fans need to get behind the chairman. Unfortunately, I have not always had their support from the terraces.'

Should Dalglish take up the offer, he would not be scouting for young talent; he would put in charge of tracking established players and submitting any choices to Smith.

Tottenham are reported to be

on the verge of paying Rosenborg £1.75m for the 19-year-old Norwegian striker Stefan Iverius.

Aston Villa, meanwhile, are confident that Savo Milosevic's £4.5m transfer to Perugia will go

international at the Kosevo Stadium since the ceasefire in Sarajevo - but both have now had to abandon their week off.

Roberto Baggio, the former Italian international, was released from hospital yesterday after a scan showed no damage from a serious blow to the head received while playing for Milan against Atalanta on Sunday.

Manchester United's Jordi Cruff has been dropped from the Dutch squad for Saturday's World Cup qualifier against Wales in Eindhoven.

David Ginola's fine form for Newcastle has failed to find favour with Aimé Jacquet, the French coach, who has once again left Ginola out of his squad for Saturday's international friendly against Denmark in Copenhagen.

Rovers widen search

with virtually unlimited funds.

A former Rovers, Kenny Dalglish, who led the club to the championship in 1995, has been asked by Rangers to help them become one of the foremost clubs in Europe. The former Celtic and Liverpool forward

has been offered a high-profile position helping to lure the Continent's top players to Ibrox.

Rangers' manager, Walter Smith, who rebuffed suggestions that Dalglish's arrival could put his own position under threat,

said: 'We had a meeting with Kenny Dalglish before the Ajax match last week. We have yet to arrange another meeting but that will be done shortly and hopefully we will be able to make an announcement.'

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Maradona's DIY drug tests

Diego Maradona, the former Argentinian captain, has admitted taking drugs on a regular basis and missing matches when his own private dope tests have been positive.

Maradona, 36, who says he has been taking cocaine since 1983, told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* that recent allegations that his urine sample was switched with another player's after a routine post-match test on 11 August were unfounded.

The other player's sample, from Boca's opponents Estudiantes, was found to be positive. Maradona, whose test was negative, has not played for the club since then and went to a Swiss clinic for treatment shortly after the match.

'It's a load of nonsense. Because for years I have done my own anti-doping controls on my own, during the week before the match. And if I tested positive in my tests, I did not play.'

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